

THE EYE OF THE SCORPION

By Iain McLaughlin

It's 1999, *Doctor Who* is back in production as a series of audios, I'm a *Doctor Who* fan who earns his crust as a writer and the nice producers of these audios have an open door policy for submissions. Am I going to give it a go? Are bears Catholic? Does the Pope poop in the woods? No, hang on. That's not quite right, is it? But you get the idea. Not giving it a go was never an option, really.

Where to begin? Well, I knew from the start that I wanted to do a historical story. I've always been a fan of historicals in *Doctor Who*. I love the idea of the Doctor popping in to keep an eye on history from time to time. So, it was going to be a historical, but in which period of history would it be set? I toyed with having the Sixth Doctor meet Henry VIII, but I couldn't come up with anything other than a blustering contest between Henry and the Doctor, and the idea of Henry VIII trying to make Peri his seventh wife, so that notion got binned. I'm a great admirer of Winston Graham's *Poldark* novels (and indeed of the TV show - Angharad Rees as Demelza was one of my first crushes on telly). Now this was much more promising as a setting for a *Doctor Who* story. There could be Squires and mines, smugglers and... spot the flaw in that great idea? *The Smugglers* had already done that back in the Sixties, so the *Doctor Who Meets Poldark* idea had to go as well. Around then, on a cold and rainy October day, I was watching the Discovery Channel and on came a documentary about Hatchepsut, the female Pharaoh. Two things struck me as I watched the documentary. One was that this had been a truly remarkable young woman who had become Pharaoh at just 17 despite protests and plotting from priests and politicians in her court and who had held onto power for over 20 years. The other was that Hatchepsut's ascent to the throne of Egypt was just ideal for a *Doctor Who* story. There was scope for court intrigue, political back-biting, enormous battles and a bit of romance as well. Perfect. And besides, it had always struck me as a little odd that someone who has travelled as much as the Doctor had never visited Egypt. Okay, so he popped in for a couple of episodes of *The Daleks' Master Plan*, but there had never been a full adventure set in Egypt during her pomp.

From the start, it was always going to be a story for the Fifth Doctor and Peri. I liked the idea of Peri getting to see and experience history first-hand, instead of looking at relics with her step-father. She would have the chance to see that history was alive and vibrant, about people living their lives and dealing with their problems rather than just being something she was forced to endure in museums. Why the Fifth Doctor? Because he seemed to me the Doctor who'd be most comfortable in a full-on historical story. Simple as that.

Around an episode and a half into writing it, the story wasn't working out right. It wasn't particularly bad, just a bit dull. Too much court intrigue and not enough action. I was also feeling a bit hamstrung by history. The facts were getting in the way of the story. Hatchepsut *did* become Pharaoh, she *did* have a relationship with Senenmut, her vizier, and she *did* reign for twenty-something years, all of which limited what I could do with her. The relationship between Peri and Hatchepsut

wasn't working either. They should have been friendly rivals but instead they were just bitching at each other and I couldn't find a way to stop them. The whole thing just wasn't falling into place and when I found out that Paul Doherty had written a novel about Hatchepsut's ascension to the throne, that put the tin hat on it. I put the story away and tried to forget about it. Maybe it would be more honest to say I took a major huff with it. (At that point the story was called *Eye of the Beetle*, and the finished episode and a half can be found in this book's appendices.)

The answer to the problem was a lot easier than I'd imagined. If Hatchepsut was replaced with another character there would be no need to worry about getting the history right. I could do whatever I wanted with this other would-be Pharaoh. That included having her face an alien threat as well as all the political dangers she would have to deal with. That's how Erimem came to be. More accurately, that's how the character came to be. The name took longer. Egyptian names nearly always meant something. Pharaoh's names often translated as things like 'Beloved of Amun' or 'Amun is pleased'. Erimem's name - Erimemushinteperem, to give Pharaoh her Sunday best - means absolutely nothing. I spent days trying to come up with a name for her and finally it came down to either An-Ankh-Amun or Erimem. I went for Erimem mainly because it felt right for her, but also because it didn't mean anything. She was never meant to be Pharaoh, so it's possible she'd have been too far down the pecking order to get a name that meant anything.

Like Hatchepsut, Erimem was 17 when fate made her Pharaoh but that was where the similarities ended. Whereas Hatchepsut was ambitious and actively sought the throne, Erimem would be a reluctant Pharaoh. She had no interest in being Pharaoh or a god. Quite the reverse, but she was trapped by fate and her duty. Her own personal hopes and interests had to be put aside for the good of Egypt. Erimem didn't want to be Pharaoh and hated the way people treated her because of her new position.

With Erimem in place, the story came together a lot easier. To give the story an authentic Hartnell-era touch, the Doctor disappeared for an episode, leaving Peri to carry the story with Erimem acting as her companion. They seemed to work pretty well together. It was fun just to let Peri chat with someone of around her own age. When Peri left the show, we didn't really know much more about her than when she first appeared. She was a botanist, a vegetarian, she had a step-father and she was a ropy swimmer. Apart from that? Not a lot really, which seemed a shame. Giving Peri some time talking with Erimem and building the beginnings of a friendship with her seemed like a fun way of getting to know Peri better.

A completed script went in the post to Big Finish, followed by two more within a few months. I had the subtle plan of bludgeoning them into taking a script by sheer weight of numbers. If I sent enough they'd take one just to make me stop. Either that or get a restraining order. Actually, the truth is that writing *The Eye of the Scorpion* had been so much fun that I couldn't resist doing another couple. Big Finish *could* resist them though and they landed back on the mat with an ominous thud. I wasn't particularly surprised. It didn't take a brain surgeon to work out that there would have been an awful lot of people trying their hand at stories. The two Colin Baker stories were both in the envelope which had thumped onto the mat, but *The Eye of the Scorpion* had been kept for another look. It hadn't been commissioned but it hadn't been rejected yet either. The letter accompanying the

returned scripts suggested tightening *Scorpion*, losing some characters and maybe giving it another go if I wanted. Who can turn down the chance to write more *Doctor Who*? Over the next few months there were various different drafts of the script. Shemek the decrepit old comedy-relief court astrologer disappeared from the script altogether along with a charioteer named Limak. The only character I really regretted losing was Rhaoubak, Erimem's mother. She and Erimem had a scene in the Palace of Concubines that highlighted how alone Erimem was. Even her own mother would only call her Pharaoh (although she did call Erimem 'my daughter' when she knew she was totally alone). It's a scene I liked a lot, but it didn't make sense to have a performer in for just one scene, so the scene was chopped and dialogue elsewhere rejigged to hint that Erimem was alienated and lonely. Some changes were made to Antranak as well, making him a darker, more driven character, probably most noticeably in the House of Death when he's quite graphic about what will be done to the would-be assassin if he doesn't co-operate. Most of that was to set up the idea that maybe Antranak really would have killed Varela to protect Erimem's position.

The biggest change was the last ten minutes of Part Four. The ending was a bit naff and not terribly *Doctor Who*. It had the Doctor isolating the parasite in Yanis and then leaving him buried underground after an offer to take the creature away from Earth was refused. I told you it was naff, didn't I? Producer Gary Russell asked for a new ending. Somewhere on my computer I had an idea about the Eighth Doctor arriving on a planet to find a woman in some sort of suspended animation. When she was defrosted she would turn out to have the memories of all the people who'd lived on the planet before the war that wiped them out. She'd eventually go a bit loopy because of the conflicting personalities inside her head. It seemed more like an incident than a story to me so I hadn't done anything with it. With a bit of jiggling about, the section slotted in. The most fun in that was taking the chance to have Peri as the villain. Initially it was going to be Erimem, playing up to the idea running all through the story of her dying and not becoming Pharaoh, but it seemed like more fun to make Peri the villain.

The new ending got the thumbs up, the script was commissioned (cue for a hangover of Olympic proportions) and that was pretty much it as far as I was concerned. There were a few more changes to the script by Gary. To be honest, I didn't notice most of them until Part Four. There was a scene I had really liked in Part Four that had been cropped. It was of the Doctor sitting round the camp-fire with Erimem and telling her stories. In isolation, I still think it's a nice little scene but it would have been bad for the story as a whole if it had stayed in. It went on too long and slowed things down. Gary was right to chop it. The lines he added to a scene set the following morning about the Doctor telling stories into the night did the job far more economically than the dropped scene and still got over the idea that maybe the Doctor was telling Erimem these stories because he didn't expect her to live much longer.

In all honesty I didn't expect Erimem to live much longer either. The ending was always going to have the Doctor taking Erimem away. From the first draft, she was always going to have the chance to leave her home in the TARDIS. It made sense for her character. She couldn't be Pharaoh and she couldn't go anywhere on Earth, so the Doctor would take her away and drop her at a university somewhere where she

could be herself and study, just like she wanted to. I even had a sort of half-formed idea for her meeting the Sixth Doctor a couple of years into her studies, though that never went any further than a few lines stored on the hard drive. The decision to keep Erimem aboard the TARDIS for a while was a surprise for me as much as the audience. I wish I could put it down to my immense genius in coming up with the character but I can't. I think the truth is really in the casting. Caroline Morris is perfect for Erimem. She doesn't look much like the way I saw Erimem in my head, but she gave the character so much personality that I can't imagine anyone doing a better job with her. Oddly, I can't remember how I heard Erimem's voice in my head before I heard Caroline in the role. She just sounds so right. I think Caroline is the reason Erimem's still around.

One question I've been asked quite a few times, and that should be answered, concerns why the story is called *The Eye of the Scorpion* when the scorpions turn up in Part Two, have a menacing scuttle towards Peri and Erimem and then get the rest of the story off. (I hear they were a nightmare in the green room - the water wasn't cold enough, the doughnuts didn't have enough jam, the insects weren't wriggly enough... honestly! The stunt scorpions who got trampled underfoot were a lot easier to work with, apparently.) So why is it called *The Eye of the Scorpion* and not *Doctor Who Discovers Ancient Egypt* or something? Because at one point very early on in putting the story together, Yanis was going to be descended from the early Skorpion dynasty of Egypt and would have been nick-named the Scorpion. I stuck with the title for two reasons. One was that I still thought of him waiting like a scorpion in the desert, ready to attack when his enemy showed weakness. The second reason was a lot simpler - in Part Two, Yanis saw through the eyes of the scorpions attacking Peri and Erimem. That's the title explained. You're wishing I hadn't bothered now, aren't you? Sorry.

THE EYE OF THE SCORPION

CAST

THE DOCTOR	Peter Davison
PERI	Nicola Bryant
YANIS	Harry Myers
FAYUM	Jack Gallagher
ANTRANAK	Jonathan Owen
ERIMEM	Caroline Morris
KISHIK	Daniel Brennan
HOREMSHEP	Stephen Perring
SLAVE	Mark Wright
PRIEST	Alistair Lock

PART ONE

1. Ancient Egypt. Around 1400 BC.

In the deserts outside Thebes, the wind whistles, blowing sand. YANIS, a mercenary chieftain, coughs and spits in the dust. He's big, loud and he has a permanent bad temper.

YANIS Damn this. Where is he?

Another voice speaks – HOREMSHEP (High Priest of Horus and leader of the Council of Priests in Thebes), though he's not identified as such yet and the wind disguises his voice.

HOREMSHEP Yanis.

YANIS Finally. I thought you had got lost in the sandstorm.

HOREMSHEP Not this close to Thebes.

YANIS A temple-rat like you could get lost in his own tunic. If I didn't need you I would tear your head from your scrawny shoulders.

HOREMSHEP Are your troops in place?

YANIS They fear me too much to be anything else.

HOREMSHEP Good. Come with me. I found something on the way here. Something important.

YANIS What is it?

HOREMSHEP You will see.

YANIS Hurry, then. Our plans will be ruined if you are missed in the city.

HOREMSHEP Here. By my chariot. Take a closer look. Open it.

YANIS That? That is worth risking everything for? I swear, if this is a trick...

Sound of a metal hinge opening, followed by a bizarre scrabbling and scratching sound. The sound gets louder.

YANIS What?

YANIS screams.¹

2. Inside the Temple at Thebes.

FAYUM, a young priest is observing the stars and tutting. He is joined by ANTRANAK, head of the temple guards and Egypt's armies. They are friends but talk as if at war – baiting each other. If their tone wasn't friendly, you'd think they loathed each other.

FAYUM This is not good. Not good at all.

ANTRANAK Still muttering and watching the night skies, Fayum? How are the omens? No, don't tell me – they're bad.

FAYUM The gods send signs in the skies that speak only of terrible things to come, Antranak.

ANTRANAK Nonsense. We are safe inside Pharaoh's own palace with my troops on constant guard. Nothing can harm us here.

FAYUM We shall see.

ANTRANAK Sometimes I wonder what you priests are taught. Still, the Gods' ways are not mine to question. I am only a soldier. Good night, Fayum. *ANTRANAK's footsteps echo into the distance.*

FAYUM (Softly) I fear we have very few good nights ahead of us.

3. TARDIS interior.

The Fifth DOCTOR is giving PERI a tour of his ship. A door closes as they enter a corridor.

PERI And that's the small library?
DOCTOR The big one's up ahead.
PERI I can't believe there's more. We've been wandering these corridors for hours.
DOCTOR I thought you wanted to know your way around.
PERI I do, believe me, but I lost my bearings six corridors, three floors and two hours ago.
DOCTOR It just takes a little getting used to, that's all. You'll know your way about in no time.
PERI So you really know what all these doors are?
DOCTOR Naturally. For instance, this is the main library.
He opens the door and we hear waves crashing on the shore.
PERI The books are going to get wet.
He shuts the door.
DOCTOR Of course, sometimes the TARDIS moves things about. Still, not to worry. A little redecorating never hurt anybody.
PERI A little redecorating? You've got a lake in there.
DOCTOR Yes, I know. I much preferred it where it was. Where to next?
PERI I don't suppose you've got a restaurant stashed away here? My stomach thinks my throat's been cut.
DOCTOR There should be a food machine around here somewhere. I haven't used it much recently.
He is interrupted by the sound of the TARDIS lurching and being buffeted and thrown about. He and PERI are thrown about. They thump into walls loudly.
PERI Doctor?
DOCTOR Grab onto something.
More lurching and then it subsides.
DOCTOR I think it's passed.
PERI It feels so hot, suddenly...
DOCTOR Yes, that's a bit worrying. Come on. This way.
DOCTOR's footsteps hurry off along the corridor.
PERI (Mutters) I'm fine thanks. How are you?
DOCTOR (Calling) Peri...
PERI Slow down. I don't want to get lost in this...
Her footsteps follow the DOCTOR's through a door. The Console Room hums.
PERI How can the Console Room be here? We've gone down three flight of stairs and...²
DOCTOR Sssh.
PERI Do...
DOCTOR Ssssh. Ah.
PERI From that 'Ah!' I take it I don't have to ask if you know what happened.
DOCTOR We've materialised. The TARDIS has been reprogrammed.
PERI By who? Is there somebody else on board?
DOCTOR I'm just checking. Oh. That can't be right. According to the

TARDIS, she was reprogrammed by me.

PERI That's impossible. We were stuck in the middle of this flying rabbit warren.

DOCTOR Yes, it does seem more than a little odd.

PERI Where are we going now?

DOCTOR Just a short hop it seems. A few million miles to the side and a couple of days back. Oh. We're almost there.

PERI One day soon, you're gonna have to teach me how these controls work.

DOCTOR *(Not entirely convinced by the idea)* Perhaps. Let's see where we are first.

4. Ext. The Egyptian desert.

The wind blows, and is then interrupted by the TARDIS materialisation noise. The door opens and PERI hurries out of the TARDIS after the DOCTOR.

PERI So where are we?

DOCTOR From the gravity and atmosphere *(sniffs)* I'd say Earth. No industrial by-products in the air? Definitely Earth. Egypt, roughly 1400BC.³

PERI Oh, come on. Even you can't tell all that from the air.

DOCTOR True, but the hieroglyphs on the wall of the house behind the TARDIS are a bit of a giveaway.

PERI Smart guy. What do they say anyway?

DOCTOR They're prayers to ward off evil and protect the house.

A door rattles on its hinges in the wind.

PERI Whoever lived here didn't have much faith in their prayers. The place is abandoned. A few jars, some rope, bits of pottery, some clothes and an old wheel...

DOCTOR *(Over Peri)* Hmm. Very interesting. *(Thoughtful)* Can you hear something?

PERI Like what?

A young woman (17) is yelling and shouting for her horses to stop. Her chariot is a runaway. She is ERIMEM. The horses snort and the chariot clatters.

ERIMEM Help me!

DOCTOR Like that.

PERI Her chariot's out of control.

DOCTOR There's another chariot. She's being chased.

All through we hear ERIMEM and her horses getting closer.

PERI He's more than chasing her.

DOCTOR Behind the TARDIS. Quickly.

Arrows zing through the air and thud into the TARDIS. ERIMEM is still trying to stop her horses.

ERIMEM Stop! Slow down. Stop!

PERI We have to do something.

DOCTOR I'm thinking.

PERI Think faster. They're almost on top of us.

DOCTOR He's can't drive and use his bow accurately at the same time... Grab that rope over there. Tie one end round the TARDIS.

PERI What are you going to do?

DOCTOR Take the other end to the far side of the breach in the wall and yank it tight after the first chariot is through.

PERI This stuff's so slippery. It's coated with some kind of oil.

ERIMEM Steady. Steady.

DOCTOR Over here. This way. Peri, are you ready?

PERI Nearly.

DOCTOR Hurry. She's almost through. Quickly.
The pounding of the horses is almost on top of them.

PERI There. Done. She's through. Pull it. Tight.
The sound of the rope going taught and then a shocked yell, followed by the sound of a man in armour hitting the ground hard.

PERI We got him.
The fallen man (a scout named KISHIK) groans. ERIMEM is yelling for her horses to stop.

ERIMEM Stop. Slow now. Stop. Whoa.
No use. The horses thunder on.

DOCTOR Her horses have been scared out of their wits. She can't control them. Keep an eye on our friend there.

PERI What?

DOCTOR I don't have time to argue. Someone has to stop those horses. Tell your friend I borrowed his chariot for a few minutes.
The sound of the reins being flicked and the chariot moving off again.

DOCTOR Hya.
The fallen KISHIK groans and mumbles.

KISHIK Wha...?

PERI I hope this isn't an antique.
The sound of a pottery jar being smashed over KISHIK's head. Another groan and he hits the dirt hard for the second time in under a minute.

PERI Sorry.

5. Ext. Desert.

Out in the desert, the DOCTOR's chariot is chasing ERIMEM's. If we could see them the horses would be sweating up a foam as they charge across the desert. Their hooves are pounding loudly and they are breathing heavily. There are two sets of chariot and horse sounds. The DOCTOR's chariot is heavier and clatters more.

DOCTOR Hya. HYA!

ERIMEM WHOA. SLOW DOWN. STOP!

DOCTOR I'm almost there.
The DOCTOR's chariot sounds are merging with ERIMEM's. They are now very close.

ERIMEM Help me.

DOCTOR Hang on.

ERIMEM Hurry.

DOCTOR You'll have to step across.

ERIMEM I can't.

DOCTOR Your horses are too frightened to stop. There's no alternative. I'm almost there. Just a little closer.
On top of the horses' snorting and pounding hooves, the sound of wheels touching and sparks flying. Both ERIMEM and the DOCTOR yelp.

DOCTOR A little too close. Gently. Gently. Now. Step across.

ERIMEM I can't.

DOCTOR You have to. Hurry, I can't hold the chariots this close for long. Take my hand. Take it! Now jump. It's just one step. Step now. *The sound of ERIMEM leaping over and landing on the DOCTOR's chariot.*

DOCTOR Got you. It's all right. I've got you. Whoa now. Whoa. *The chariot pulls to a stop.*

DOCTOR Are you hurt?

ERIMEM Stay away from me.

DOCTOR It's all right. I'm not going to hurt you. Though I can't say the same for the chap I borrowed this chariot from.⁴

ERIMEM Where is he?

DOCTOR Back there with a friend of mine. Unconscious.

ERIMEM Good. Get me away from here.

DOCTOR I don't suppose you'd care to tell me why he was trying to kill you?

ERIMEM You don't know?

DOCTOR If I knew I wouldn't ask, would I?

ERIMEM You are a stranger here.

DOCTOR Well, I've been to Egypt before but I don't think I've been recently.

ERIMEM Take me to Thebes.

DOCTOR You haven't answered my question.

ERIMEM When we are safe in Thebes, I will answer all your questions. Just get me there.

DOCTOR All right. Hold on. Hup. Giddup. *The horses pull the chariot away.*

6. In the desert, by the TARDIS.

The DOCTOR's chariot pulls up by PERI.

PERI Doctor. I'm glad you're back.

DOCTOR Whoa.

KISHIK *groans.* *Another pot smashes and he hits the ground hard again.*

PERI That's my last pot.

DOCTOR You enjoyed that too much, young lady.

ERIMEM I hoped he would be dead.

DOCTOR I think that's rather harsh, don't you?

ERIMEM I owe him and his kind a hundred times worse.

PERI You got her, then.

DOCTOR So it would seem.

PERI So who is she? And why was this guy trying to kill her? I thought he might have been a bandit but that's battle armour he's wearing.

DOCTOR Yes. I spotted that as well. And whoever this is, she's too afraid to talk here. She's almost in shock. We'll take her to Thebes. She's sure she'll be safe there.⁵ And we might get some answers.

PERI What about him? Four of us on that chariot is going to be cramped.

DOCTOR These war chariots were built for two passengers and a driver. Leave your sleeping friend there. He'll be all right in a minute or two, apart from a terrible headache.

ERIMEM Others of his kind are bound to be close by now. We must leave at once.

DOCTOR That might be a good idea. I've had more than enough excitement for one day.
PERI And we still don't know what brought us here.
DOCTOR One crisis at a time, Peri. One crisis at a time.

7. The desert.

Another squadron of chariots pulls to a stop. In one is YANIS. He's not best pleased at the DOCTOR's rescue of ERIMEM. In the far distance we hear the DOCTOR's chariot clatter away.

YANIS Stop. Stop. We'll never catch them before they reach Thebes. Their archers would slaughter us as we approached. Damn you, Stranger. Where did you come from?

8. Thebes.

The chariot rattles and chunters towards Thebes.

DOCTOR Here we are, Peri. Thebes.
PERI I didn't expect it to be so huge.
DOCTOR Yes, impressive, isn't it?
PERI If Howard could see me now. He always complained that I didn't share his interest in history.
DOCTOR Where to?
ERIMEM The palace.
DOCTOR Are you sure? This is an enemy chariot, I don't think they'll exactly welcome us with open arms.
ERIMEM That will not be a problem, Doctor.
PERI Doctor... have you noticed the people...
DOCTOR ...are all kneeling?
PERI And bowing. And generally grovelling.
DOCTOR Excuse me. I don't think you told us exactly who you are.
ERIMEM No. I did not. Stand proud and firm. Show that nothing has happened to harm us.
PERI We've got company.
DOCTOR So I see. Whoa there. Whoa.
The chariot halts. More chariots rattle to join them.
PERI I don't like the look of those swords, Doctor.
DOCTOR I'm not too keen on the spears either. Best behaviour, Peri.
ANTRANAK Mighty one. We sing praises to the Gods for your safe return.
PERI Mighty one?
When ERIMEM speaks now there is a change in her. She is strong and firm. Regal.
ERIMEM Escort us to the palace, Antranak. We have a great deal to do but this is not the place to do it.
ANTRANAK As you command, mighty Pharaoh.
PERI Pharaoh?
DOCTOR I must be getting old. I thought I knew the names of all of Egypt's pharaohs.
PERI Should I be bowing or curtsying or something?
ERIMEM Yes, but please refrain from doing so. The chariot is quite

small – and it would be very unseemly for a friend of Pharaoh to fall off in public.

PERI Whatever you say.

ERIMEM I would wager, Doctor, that you did not expect anything like this when you first saw my chariot being chased.

DOCTOR Er, not really, no.

ERIMEM But I think the unexpected is something you are familiar with. Am I right?

DOCTOR I was under the impression that divine Pharaoh is always right.

ERIMEM (*Laughs*) I'm yet to actually be crowned Doctor, but when I have been, I think I would do well to avoid sparring in word games with you. Now smile and wave to the people. We have been victorious.

9. Yanis's Camp.

YANIS is not best pleased. He's in a fouler than usual mood.

YANIS So. You are the spineless pig who let the whelp of a girl escape?⁶ Do you have an explanation as to how the Egyptian pup escaped from a squadron of over a dozen chariots? Make your answer good, Kishik, or I will stake you in the sand and watch the buzzards feast on your eyes and innards.

KISHIK It wasn't my fault, sire. I plead for mercy.

YANIS Save your pleading, dung-beetle. I want answers. How did she escape?

KISHIK She had a large escort. Six... No, ten chariots. We killed all the rest – we even got her driver.

YANIS And still she escaped? Imbecile! Worse – coward!

KISHIK No, Lord Yanis. She had help.

YANIS What help?

KISHIK A man with fair hair and strange clothing... And a violent girl who repeatedly struck me even when I was unable to defend myself.

YANIS (*Roaring – the pretence is gone*) I know – I saw her. I saw it all. A girl should be no match for a man – or even you. Tell me about the man.

KISHIK I barely saw him, sire. I only know that he knocked me from my chariot as if my magic.

YANIS Not magic, idiot – rope. But he handled the chariot like a true warrior. The brat's horses were running as though they had demons at their tails but he took our chariot and caught them easily. I've never seen better.

KISHIK Except for you, of course, mighty Yanis.

YANIS (*Sneering at the grovelling, then thoughtful.*) Of course.

Even at speed he pulled the girl onto his chariot with one hand. My gut tells me he is a dangerous enemy.

KISHIK Let me take a party into Thebes to kill him.

YANIS If I sent anyone to do that, it would be someone I could trust to follow orders. And you were ordered not to attack the Egyptian chariots until I arrived.

KISHIK But they would have escaped if I had waited any longer.

YANIS What has happened is that now that unbedded whelp who calls herself Pharaoh knows that we are here and she knows that we will

attack sooner rather than later. I think I should slit you open and let the dogs feed. You're worse than useless.⁸

KISHIK No, great Yanis. Mercy, please. I have a wife and four children at home. Let me live. I will not fail you again. I am loyal. I have always been loyal to you.

YANIS And to my predecessor. As I remember, you helped me murder him. I will let you live, Kishik, but at a price.

KISHIK Anything. I'll do anything...

YANIS I know you will. Come through here. My private shrine is in the back of this tent.

KISHIK I am unworthy, lord.

Sound of them moving through.

KISHIK It is dark. I can't see.

YANIS Here, I'll bring a light.

KISHIK What? No!

There is an insect-like skittering sound - like thousands of insects milling about over each other.

KISHIK NO! SAVE ME!

KISHIK screams and then is quiet - only the insect skittering sound.

YANIS At least now you may be useful.

10. Int. Erimem's Suite at the Palace.

A knock at the door.

ERIMEM Come.

Door opens and ANTRANAK enters.

ANTRANAK Pharaoh.

ERIMEM You have news, Antranak?

ANTRANAK Yes, Highness. I sent a chariot squadron to the area of the desert where you were attacked. The bodies of our men were recovered. They will be buried with honour and their souls will find rest.

ERIMEM Good. Meanwhile, I have ordered a banquet to thank the strangers who saved me today. I will need my friend there.

ANTRANAK As you command, Majesty. *(A little uncertainly)* You do these strangers a great honour with this banquet.

ERIMEM No more than they have earned.

ANTRANAK True. But what do we know of them?

ERIMEM Only that they risked their lives to save mine without knowing who or what I was. You don't trust them?

ANTRANAK I don't know them, Majesty, but they arrived at a fortunate time for you.

ERIMEM For which I am grateful.

ANTRANAK As am I. Perhaps I have been a soldier too long, but good luck like this makes me suspicious. Especially when my Pharaoh's safety is in question.

ERIMEM *(Kindly - this is a friend)* We have all had enough bad fortune this year, Antranak. Let us celebrate what good luck we can.

ANTRANAK I will be at the banquet as you wish. With your permission, I will go and prepare myself.

ERIMEM Of course.

Door closes behind ANTRANAK.

11. Int. Palace outside Erimem's suite.

ANTRANAK speaks to the soldiers on guard outside ERIMEM's suite as he comes through the door.

ANTRANAK Soldier. Double the guard on Great Pharaoh's chambers immediately.

SOLDIER Sir.

ANTRANAK And set others near the quarters of the pair who came into the city with Pharaoh, but don't make it obvious. There's no need for them to know we're watching them.

12. The Palace at Thebes.

The DOCTOR is calling for PERI - a tad impatiently.

DOCTOR Peri, are you ready yet?

PERI I'll be out in a minute.

DOCTOR Do try to hurry. It's considered bad form to keep the ruler of the known world waiting in her own palace.

PERI Okay, okay. Here I come, ready or not. Well? What do you think?

DOCTOR You've been busy.⁹

PERI Not me. I've had half a dozen servants helping me bathe, get this dress on, put this stuff on my eyes...

DOCTOR Kohl. It's used to make the slice-eye shape.

PERI At least you didn't have servants trying to shave your head.

DOCTOR Well, it is their custom for people to have bald heads and wear wigs. Much cooler in the heat, apparently.

PERI Can we see the pyramids from here? I've always wanted to see them. And the Sphinx.

DOCTOR I'm afraid not. Thebes is quite a way from Giza. If we were in the Royal Palace at Memphis it would be a different story. Shall we?

PERI Is something wrong? You look a bit, I don't know - edgy.

DOCTOR Just hoping my memory's playing up, that's all. I can name every Pharaoh Egypt ever had and I'm certain there was never a Pharaoh Erimem.

PERI She's due to be crowned in a few weeks. You must be wrong. Maybe you just forgot her.

DOCTOR Female pharaohs were a rarity, Peri. I'm not likely to forget one. Hatchepsut... Smenkhare... No. Something must happen to stop Erimem being crowned.

PERI And now we have to go and have a banquet with her, knowing that she never gets to be Pharaoh? You really know how to kill an evening, Doctor.

13. Int. Palace at Thebes.

There are the sounds of a crowd gathering. Low talking and muted music.

FAYUM You look worried, Antranak. Of course, you always look worried.

ANTRANAK I'm in no mood for your humour today, Fayum.

FAYUM I fear your mood is about to get worse.
They are joined by HOREMSHEP.

HOREMSHEP Greetings to you both.

ANTRANAK What do you want, Horemshep?

HOREMSHEP Does the Priest of Horus need a reason for speaking to the head of the palace guard?

ANTRANAK You never do anything without a reason. What is it this time?

HOREMSHEP Nothing. What do you know of the strangers Pharaoh honours with this banquet?

ANTRANAK Only what my Pharaoh tells me. That is enough - for anyone. Even the chief of priests.

HOREMSHEP Of course. But still, I am curious.

ANTRANAK Then question Pharaoh and leave me be.

HOREMSHEP Surely you're not jealous of Pharaoh's new friends, Antranak? She has never honoured you with a banquet. But then, you haven't saved her life either.

ANTRANAK I warn you, priest...

FAYUM *(Butting in)* If you are so interested in Pharaoh's guests, Horemshep, why not ask them? They have just arrived.
A little fanfare heralds the entrance of PERI and the DOCTOR.

HOREMSHEP Perhaps later. Gentlemen.
HOREMSHEP's footsteps head away.

FAYUM Why does he constantly bait you, Antranak?

ANTRANAK Because I have almost as much influence in the palace as he does and that eats away at him. But I should know better than to rise to his bait. And now I have duties to perform.

FAYUM Of course.

13a. Int. Palace.

The rumblings of the large gathering. Lots of chatter. Muted conversations as if we're moving through the great hall until we get to the DOCTOR and PERI.

PERI Is this party all for us, Doctor?
Music is played - a fanfare.

DOCTOR I think we're on.

ANTRANAK *(Grandly)* The great and mighty queen, daughter of the stars. Pharaoh in the eyes of the Gods and soon to be crowned, all bow to Erimemushinteperem, divine and eternal, the living god.

DOCTOR *(Quietly)* Peri, kneel.

PERI *(Muttering - struggling a bit)* I'd like to see you kneel wearing a dress this tight.

DOCTOR Ssh.

ERIMEM Rise and approach, Doctor. And you, Peri.
Slight delay while the footsteps of the DOCTOR and PERI approach the throne.

ERIMEM The Doctor and Peri have done great service to your Pharaoh and to Egypt. As thanks, Doctor, I give you this cartouche bearing my divine name. It marks you as friend of Pharaoh and under my divine protection.

DOCTOR You do us great honour, mighty Pharaoh.

ERIMEM Now let the banquet begin.
A walloping great gong.

ERIMEM You will sit by Pharaoh, Doctor.
DOCTOR Thank you.
PERI Absolutely, your Majesty.
ANTRANAK *speaks to FAYUM, renewing their banter.*
FAYUM Nice speech, Antranak.
ANTRANAK This is a strange day, Fayum. An outsider sitting at Pharaoh's right hand.
FAYUM Pharaoh makes her own decisions.
ANTRANAK And some do not like them?
FAYUM To say that would be to admit treason. Everyone knows that divine Pharaoh is infallible.
ANTRANAK Not everyone shares your opinion. I know of the split in the council of priests.
FAYUM Officially, there is no split - only a... debate.
ANTRANAK You will have to learn to lie better than that if you want to prosper at court.
Back at the top table, PERI is obviously having a bit of a look round.
PERI Doctor, what's with the bug motif around the hall?
DOCTOR The Scarab Beetle. Some of the priests think the beetle is sacred.
PERI It's just like being at home - Mom worshipped Paul McCartney. I wish I'd brought a camera.
DOCTOR And how would you explain it to the developer?
PERI Never been to a toga party?
DOCTOR Well, I was at a bash Nero threw once.
Music starts up. Obviously music for the dancing girls.
DOCTOR The entertainment.
PERI Dancers? Oh. They're topless!
DOCTOR Well, yes I suppose they are. It's the custom. Just ignore them if it bothers you.¹
PERI Easy for you to say. You're not being leched at by that black toothed priest over there. If he asks me to dance I'll punch him.
DOCTOR You'll do no such thing. That's the Priest of the Temple of Horus. He's chief of the council of priests.²
PERI Just joking. Those other topless girls - are they the next dancers?
DOCTOR Ah... well. no. Actually, they're a different kind of entertainment.
PERI Singers? (*Dawn of realisation*) You don't mean... hookers? These people need a cold shower.
DOCTOR You may find some of their activities offensive but remember, you're seeing them from a 20th century perspective.² By this time's standards, being a palace servant, even in this capacity, is quite respectable.
ERIMEM Are you enjoying the banquet, Doctor?
DOCTOR Very much, your majesty. Aren't we, Peri?
PERI Having a great time.
ERIMEM You must try the roast boar. It is absolutely excellent.
DOCTOR Why not?
ERIMEM (*Claps hands to SLAVE*) Bring boar for my guest.^{1,2}

PERI Is now a good time to remind you that I'm a vegetarian?
DOCTOR (*Quietly*) It would be a huge insult to refuse Pharaoh's recommendation. Just push it round your plate.¹⁴
Sounds of a servant dishing up from a platter. His accent is not local.

SLAVE You want more boar, lady?
PERI No thanks. I don't want to pig out. That's not meant to be a bad pig joke. Sorry.
SLAVE (*Confused*) Lady?
PERI Never mind.
SLAVE Lord?
DOCTOR I don't mind if I do. Thank you.
Sound of the slave spilling food as he serves it up. The plate scraping and the DOCTOR shifting quickly.

DOCTOR Careful.
SLAVE I am sorry, Lord.
ERIMEM Our apologies, Doctor.
DOCTOR It's all right. No harm done.
PERI (*Quietly*) The waiter's not very good, is he?
DOCTOR No. His clothes don't quite fit him either, come to that.
ERIMEM No more boar for me.
Scraping on the plate.

ERIMEM I said...
Sound of a heavy plate being thrown aside.

SLAVE Death to Erimem!
DOCTOR No!
PERI Doctor!
Yells and noises of confusion and struggle, including a cry of pain from the DOCTOR.

ERIMEM You have saved me again, Doctor.
PERI You're bleeding.
DOCTOR (*Obviously in a bit of pain*) It's nothing much. Just a flesh wound, really. The knife only grazed my hand.
The SLAVE laughs.

ERIMEM Tell me what is so funny, before you die.
SLAVE (*Struggling - obviously being choked*) Then I will not die alone. The dagger was coated with poison. He has only minutes to live.
Sound of someone keeling over, sending plates spilling noisily to the floor.

PERI Doctor!

END OF PART ONE

PART TWO

13a (cont). Recap from Part One.

At the banquet. Sounds of general banqueting.

PERI The waiter's not very good is he?

DOCTOR No. His clothes don't quite fit him either, come to that.

ERIMEM No more boar for me.

Scraping on the plate.

ERIMEM I said...

Sound of a heavy plate being thrown aside.

SLAVE Death to Erimem!

DOCTOR No!

PERI Doctor!

Yells and noises of confusion and struggle, including a cry of pain from the DOCTOR.

ERIMEM You have saved me again, Doctor.

PERI You're bleeding.

DOCTOR (*Obviously in a bit of pain*) It's nothing much. Just a flesh wound, really. The knife only grazed my hand.

The SLAVE laughs.

ERIMEM Tell me what is so funny, before you die.

SLAVE (*Struggling - obviously being choked*) Then I will not die alone. The dagger was coated with poison. He has only minutes to live.

Sound of someone keeling over, sending plates spilling noisily to the floor.

PERI Doctor!

ERIMEM Take him to my chambers. And be gentle with him.¹⁵

PERI You're going to be okay, Doctor. You'll get through this.

DOCTOR Actually, Peri, I'm not feeling all that well.

The DOCTOR then mutters and mumbles incoherently.

ERIMEM Antranak, torture this creature. I want to know why he tried to kill me and who sent him. Find out who dares attack Pharaoh.

The SLAVE slumps and groans.

SLAVE You will learn nothing from me.

ANTRANAK He must have taken poison himself. Already this world is slipping away from him.

PERI Who are you? Why did you do it?

ERIMEM Who sent you? Answer me! Who do you serve?

SLAVE (*Fading*) The true Pharaoh.

Sound of the SLAVE hitting the floor, followed by the buzz of whispered conversation. The comment about the true Pharaoh has got a reaction from the cheap seats at the banquet.

ANTRANAK He is unconscious. What should we do, Pharaoh?

No answer.

ANTRANAK Pharaoh?

There's an air of anticipation.

PERI Erimem, you have to do something.

ERIMEM Discover what you can about this scum then throw the corpse into the Nile. Let the crocodiles have him. I will be in my chambers. Will you accompany me, Peri?

PERI Of course.
ANTRANAK Take this filth to be tortured.
FAYUM Antranak.
ANTRANAK What is it, Fayum?
FAYUM What did the killer mean when he said 'the true Pharaoh'?'
ANTRANAK How should I know? I'm not privy to the thought of killers.¹⁶
FAYUM It will be the gossip of Thebes within the hour.
ANTRANAK I don't doubt it.
FAYUM Then you must discover what he meant by true Pharaoh.¹⁷
ANTRANAK I don't need a junior priest telling me what I have to do. I have been commander of the palace armies since long before you came to the royal court.
FAYUM I meant no disrespect, Commander.
ANTRANAK I know. I didn't mean to speak so harshly.
FAYUM The last year has seen great unrest and turmoil in Egypt.¹⁸ The sudden death of our beloved Pharaoh coupled with the other tragedies of our royal house have caused great distress to our people. This rumour will only make matters worse. And it will be used by those in the council of priests who oppose Erimem's coronation.
ANTRANAK You will do what you can in council to quash this ridiculous idea.
FAYUM Of course. If you will excuse me.¹⁹ I think the Doctor has need of my training as a physician.
ANTRANAK *breathes out heavily.*

14. Yanis's Camp.

A tent flap opens. KISHIK enters.

KISHIK Mighty Yanis, word has come from Thebes...
YANIS The Pharaoh girl is alive. I know, Kishik.
KISHIK How can you know...?
YANIS I know everything, idiot. I knew this plan wouldn't work. But at least Erimem's new champion is dead.

15. The House Of Death.

The House of Death – the temple for torturing prisoners, sounds dank, depressing and violent. There are crackling torches, scraping metal blades and lots of agonised screams. There's the sizzle of burning flesh followed sharpish by a loud scream.

ANTRANAK Talk. Tell me who sent you to kill Pharaoh at the banquet? Who is your master?
Lots of whimpering from the prisoner but no answer.
ANTRANAK You know where you are?
No answer. A whimper at best.
ANTRANAK This is the House of Death. No one leaves here alive. You are going to die here today, but I am Antranak and I am Chief of the Palace Guard. As such, the manner of your death is in my power. If you answer my questions you will die quickly and feel no more pain. You

could even take pleasure with one of the temple girls before you die. You'd like that? But if you don't answer, I will have your eyes gouged from your head. Your nose and ears will be shorn from your face and then you will be castrated. I will leave your tongue in your head so that you can beg for death and tell me who sent you. Now who is your master?

The prisoner spits. From ANTRANAK's reaction, we'd say the prisoner spat in his face.

ANTRANAK You are a fool. But you will tell me in time. Priests, set burning coals under this vermin. Perhaps fire will burn the truth from his carcass.

As the door closes, there are crackles and then another wild scream from the prisoner.

16. Erimem's Chambers.

PERI and ERIMEM are present as FAYUM is tending the DOCTOR.

ERIMEM What is the Doctor's condition, Fayum?

FAYUM His pulse and breathing are weak, Pharaoh, like the old in their last days.

PERI But he's going to be all right?

FAYUM By all that I know he should be dead already. I have seen a few cases of poisoning such as this and none have survived as long as your friend.

ERIMEM So he will survive?

FAYUM I fear not, Highness. There is no cure for the venom and it is always fatal. He is unconscious, so at least he will feel no pain.²⁰

PERI There must be something you can do. What about antitoxins? Or even penicillin?

FAYUM I don't understand, my lady.

PERI Of course you don't. They haven't been discovered yet. Maybe if I could find the right mosses I could make some, but I don't know if they even grow here.

ERIMEM Tend the Doctor, Fayum. Help him all you can.

FAYUM I must attend an emergency council meeting soon but I have called for a more experienced healer to attend him while I am gone. But there is something else that seems odd. I would swear that I could make out the beating of two hearts in his chest.²¹

ERIMEM Two hearts?

PERI Doctor? Doctor, can you hear me? Come on, Doctor, you can come through this. You have to. You can't just leave me here.

ERIMEM He can't hear you, Peri.

PERI I know. I just can't believe a little scratch like that can kill him.

ERIMEM Our people are skilled in the uses of poison.

PERI You must be so proud.

ERIMEM No, but it is a fact nonetheless. Denying it will not change that.

PERI So what do we do now? Sit here and wait for the Doctor to die?

ERIMEM You could tell me why he seems to have two hearts.

PERI It's probably a long story.

A knock at the door and ANTRANAK's feet entering.

ANTRANAK Majesty.

ERIMEM Antranak, what have you learned?

ANTRANAK Not as much as I would have liked, Majesty. The enemy charioteer we found in the desert still refuses to speak. For now, we know only that the assassin appears to have entered the palace an hour or so before the banquet began.²²

PERI How did he get in? Don't you have any security here?

ANTRANAK One of the hesets saw him coming from the Palace of Concubines. She thought he was one of the eunuchs.

ERIMEM If he had lived, I would have made sure that he became one and then executed him.

PERI Have you asked at the... what's it called?

ERIMEM Palace of Concubines.

PERI That's it.

ANTRANAK That is not permitted. Other than eunuchs and the women themselves, only Pharaoh may enter.

PERI So you're not going to question them?

ERIMEM That would be an unacceptable breach of our laws.

PERI I'll go. I'll find out what he was doing in there.

ANTRANAK That is not possible.

PERI What if your Pharaoh says it is allowed?

ANTRANAK My Pharaoh's word is law.

PERI Erimem... your Majesty... let me go into the Palace. Please.

ERIMEM Antranak, will you prepare an escort for us?

PERI Us? You're coming with me?

ERIMEM When I am crowned Pharaoh, I will be able to change laws as I see fit. For now, this is the only way you can enter the house of concubines.

PERI Okay. Let's get going.

ANTRANAK (*Not at all happy*) Pharaoh, I must protest...

ERIMEM You have always been a good friend, Antranak. To my father and now to me. Please. Prepare the escort.

ANTRANAK Thank you, Pharaoh. I will arrange a guard of my most trusted men. They will be ready within the hour.

17. The Palace.

The door closes behind ANTRANAK.

ANTRANAK Soldier. Tell my personal guard to prepare themselves. They will be protecting Pharaoh herself tonight. I will join them presently. *With a shuffle of feet, the soldier goes. ANTRANAK's footsteps hurry off in another direction. FAYUM runs towards him, a little breathless. A fly buzzes annoyingly throughout.*

FAYUM Antranak. Antranak...

ANTRANAK Fayum? Your council meeting finished sooner than I expected. What did they decide?

FAYUM I'm surprised you don't know already. I'm sure your spies had their ears pressed to the door as usual. You should take care, Antranak. If your men were caught listening to the council, you could be executed. You have a great many enemies in there.

ANTRANAK I am too long in the tooth to care for such piddling laws. Besides, my spies will have heard nothing. The doors are solid wood and

thicker than one of the great stones of the pyramids. Tell me what was decided – or I shall hear it from the priest of Maab in the nearest tavern.

FAYUM The council decided that Erimem...

ANTRANAK The Mighty Erimem.

FAYUM ...as you will, cannot be crowned Pharaoh until certain questions have been answered.

ANTRANAK Even the flies feel the unrest. Go on.

FAYUM The question of whether there can even be a female Pharaoh is a contentious one, which has the council split in half.

ANTRANAK Who is against?

FAYUM Horemshep is obviously the loudest opponent of the coronation. And where the Priest of Horus goes...

ANTRANAK ...the House of Isis follows. Who else?

FAYUM All those you would expect to sit in Horemshep's shadow, hoping for his approval.²³ The priests of Seth, Hathor... The rest of us believe that the coronation should proceed. The houses of Osiris and Ma'at spoke loudly in favour of Erimem – the Mighty Erimem.

ANTRANAK As did you? I would bet my life that you did.²⁴ What of the assassin's claim?

FAYUM It will be investigated fully – there will be no coronation until it is. That was the compromise agreed.

ANTRANAK You would delay the coronation on the dying words of a killer?

FAYUM I will show you why we have chosen to delay the coronation. Come with me.

Sound of their feet moving along the corridor.

ANTRANAK Where are we going? I have a great deal to do.

Footsteps climbing stone stairs.

FAYUM Just to the balcony. There. What do you see?

ANTRANAK Is this a game? I see Thebes. What else would I see?

FAYUM No. Look closer. We are late into the night and yet the lights still burn. The taverns and inns are still filled with people. And what do you think they are talking of? 'The True Pharaoh'. Our people rely upon this palace for leadership. They will have asked questions among themselves concerning Erimem's claim.²⁵ Now, with this, they will be confused and in the city there will be unrest. Only when this question of another claim to the throne has been investigated and dismissed can Erimem ascend to the throne clear of suspicions and accusations of unworthiness.

ANTRANAK You may be right.

FAYUM I think that is the first time you have ever openly agreed with me.

ANTRANAK It's late, I'm tired and I must be getting old. I'll try not to let it happen again.²⁶

FAYUM (*Laughing*) Please do. I would hate for both of our reputations to be tarnished.

ANTRANAK I doubt anyone's opinion of you could fall any lower.

FAYUM And I doubt their opinion of you is particularly high after your troops let a murderer into the palace.

ANTRANAK I know that. Damn flies.

Fly's buzzing continues.

FAYUM How are your investigations progressing?

ANTRANAK Steadily. We are making progress.
FAYUM And the Mighty Erimem? Is she safe?
ANTRANAK (*A tad uncomfortably*) I must join her soon. She is planning to visit the Palace of Concubines. As safe a place as any in the palace.
FAYUM I hope so. But now I wonder if anywhere is safe. Everything seems so uncertain now. Even here in the Palace of Pharaoh herself.
ANTRANAK The palace is more secure than it has ever been.²⁷
YANIS A lie and you know it.

18. Yanis's tent.

YANIS can hear the last few lines of the conversation between FAYUM and ANTRANAK, though the voices are distorted. Tent flap opens and KISHIK enters, the dialogue over ANTRANAK's and FAYUM's.

KISHIK Great Yanis...
YANIS Begone, Kishik. I will not be disturbed. By anyone.
KISHIK As you command.
YANIS Now, where were we? Speak up, idiots.
FAYUM (*Distort*) Would it not have been more prudent for Erimem to visit the Palace of Concubines in the morning?²⁸
ANTRANAK (*Distort*) I do not question Pharaoh's actions.
FAYUM (*Distort*) Is she going, perhaps, to investigate the rumours that the assassin was seen coming from there?
ANTRANAK (*Distort*) Pharaoh need not explain herself to anyone. Besides, how could I stop her? Her will is law.
YANIS (*Laughing*) And soon her body will feed the jackals.
ANTRANAK (*Distort*) I should be returning to Pharaoh now...²⁹

19. Palace balcony.

Mix mid-sentence to the ongoing conversation, now without the distortion.

ANTRANAK I should be returning to Pharaoh now...
A fly still buzzes around.
ANTRANAK Damn this fly.
His hand slaps.
ANTRANAK Missed. Ha!
A metal clatter – this time he splats the fly.
FAYUM A sword to squash a fly, Antranak? Now I know we are safe.
ANTRANAK (*Snorting*) It made me feel better, Fayum. Now, tend to the Doctor and we'll talk later.

20. Yanis's tent. Int.

With the fly dead, YANIS can't hear any more of ANTRANAK's conversation.

YANIS Ah! You did well my little friend. You let me hear enough.
Sound of a device being switched off – there's fumbling and cack-handed operation of the device. YANIS obviously isn't used to anything like this.
YANIS Incredible device. What other marvels are hidden here I wonder? (*Bellows*) Kishik!
Sound of tent flap opening.

KISHIK: Lord Yanis?
YANIS Prepare the troops. We surround Thebes immediately.
KISHIK As you command, my Lord. But... surely their armies will sight us before we get near the city.
YANIS Of course they will. But an army mourning the tragic death of that virgin brat, Erimem, will have no stomach for fighting. It will be a glorious slaughter.
KISHIK Erimem is dead?
YANIS Not yet but soon. Very soon. Prepare the troops.
Sound of KISHIK leaving. The device is fiddled with again. YANIS still hasn't got the hang of it.
YANIS I must alert more of our smallest soldiers to their great task.

21. The Palace of Concubines.

The sound of a platoon of guards arriving at the Palace with PERI and ERIMEM. ANTRANAK leads the guards.

ANTRANAK Halt.
Footsteps stop.
ANTRANAK Majesty, we are here. I will rouse the Palace of Concubines.
PERI It's enormous. How many women are in here?
ERIMEM My father had over sixty wives when he died.
Thumping on solid wooden doors. A demand for entry rather than genteel knocking.
ERIMEM Brides of my divine fathers. We ask permission to enter.
No answer.
PERI Nobody home?
ANTRANAK I believe I know the reason for the delay, Majesty. One of the palace women was found dead a few hours ago.^{3c}
ERIMEM Was it Rhaoubak? Antranak?
ANTRANAK No, Majesty. Your mother is well, but like the other women, she is in mourning for Varela.
ERIMEM Varela?
PERI You knew her?
ERIMEM She tended me when I was a child.
PERI Why did she kill herself, Antranak?
ANTRANAK I don't know. They say she had been quiet these last few days. Today she took scorpion venom while sitting in the gardens.
ERIMEM I am growing weary of these mysteries. But under the circumstances, perhaps we should let the women mourn tonight.
PERI I don't want to seem harsh but we still need to know what the killer was doing in there.
ERIMEM Antranak?
ANTRANAK She is right. We do need answers, Highness.
PERI If we wait it might be too late to help the Doctor.
ERIMEM You are right. We will mourn Varela later.
PERI Besides, one of the women could slip away.
ERIMEM Impossible. There is only one exit from this palace.
ANTRANAK Actually, Great One, there is a second - it dates back hundreds of years. Very few know of its existence.

PERI Show us.

ANTRANAK I would but I may not enter.
A heftier thump on the door this time.

ANTRANAK Women, open your doors for Pharaoh Erimemushinteperem,
 daughter of light.
*The doors open. A slave - obviously mute - answers the door with a
 snivelling grunt.*

ANTRANAK You took your time.
A downtrodden grunt.

PERI He's here now. Don't scare him to death.

ANTRANAK You know the hidden exit from the palace?
A grunt that says yes.

PERI Show us where it is.

ERIMEM Peri, wait.

PERI What?

ERIMEM I must enter first. If you had gone ahead of me, your life
 would be forfeit.

PERI Okay. After you.

ANTRANAK (*Quietly to PERI - ERIMEM isn't meant to hear this*) Hear
 me, girl. My Pharaoh may be walking into danger to help you enter this
 place.³¹ I hold you responsible for her safety. If any harm comes to her,
 you will answer to me. Remember that.

PERI If you had done your job properly, we wouldn't have to go
 in here.³² You remember that.

ERIMEM Peri?

PERI Coming.

ANTRANAK My troops will wait for you, Pharaoh.
The doors close behind them.

PERI Which way?
The slave grunts.

ERIMEM Show us.
*Inside the palace, there are sounds of crying. It gets louder as their
 footsteps head forward.*

ERIMEM The women weep for Varela.

PERI It's probably best that we look at this other exit first and
 talk to them later.

ERIMEM I think that is wise. Their tears make me uncomfortable,
 too.

PERI I thought it was just me. Do you want to see your mother
 while we're here?

ERIMEM More than I can say, but I have seen her weep enough
 recently. How far to the entrance?
A grunt.

PERI Is everyone this talkative?

ERIMEM The slave's tongue was cut from his head after he was
 taken in battle.

PERI And he's a eunuch as well? Poor guy.
A grunt that says we're here.

PERI This is it? I don't see anything.
A stone door swings open with a loud rumble.

ERIMEM As it should be. The exit is hidden - put here in case
 invaders took the palace.

PERI (Voice echoing slightly) We'll need torches. These two will do.

Flaming torches crackle as they're taken from wall brackets.

PERI Perhaps we should go back and collect some of your palace guards.

ERIMEM The only men who can enter here are eunuchs, remember? I cannot foresee many of my troops volunteering for that duty.

PERI Good point. I mean, good point, your Majesty.

ERIMEM Please. Do not worry about any title. Life is much simpler and easier if people just call me Erimem.

PERI That won't get my head cut off or anything? I'm allergic to decapitation. It's bad for the circulation.

ERIMEM (Laughs) You are a strange one, Peri, but that is good. I hope I can call you a friend.

PERI Who am I to say no to a Pharaoh?

ERIMEM Wait here, Slave.

Slave grunts.

ERIMEM If we do not return by dawn, sends guards after us and let Seth take our traditions.

PERI Lots of guards. Big ones. With plenty of weapons.

Another grunt. The rumble of the stone moving again.

21a. Int. Thebes Palace.

FAYUM is mixing herbs etc. with pestle and mortar. Or some such.

FAYUM I wish I could identify the poison that has taken you, Doctor. Pharaoh has told me to find a cure but I'm not sure if I can. Of course, if I don't, you'll die. Pharaoh will be unhappy. Antranak will be unhappy because Pharaoh is unhappy and so I will, naturally, become somewhat more unhappy. And then I...

Something has shocked him

FAYUM Doctor! Doc -

He is cut off as someone's hand goes over his mouth, he drops the bowls etc to the floor and is mumbling panic-struck...

22. The passage under the Palace of Concubines.

PERI and ERIMEM hear their footsteps echo eerily.

ERIMEM These passages must be almost five hundred years old.

PERI Kind of creepy, aren't they? Claustrophobic.

ERIMEM I do feel a certain... unease.

PERI These tapestries are amazing. The needlework is so intricate but from the way the colours have faded they must be decades old. More maybe.

ERIMEM The women must have made them up above and decorated the passages with them.

PERI To make them homey, just in case? I have to say, I don't think it is working.

ERIMEM There is the doorway.

PERI The dust on the floor. Footprints. There's just one set of tracks - heading up the way we came, so it wasn't someone coming down

here from the Palace. I'd bet my last buck those are the assassin's prints from when he came in.³³ (*Beat*) Can we talk about something else for a while?

ERIMEM Tell me about you and the Doctor, Peri. Have you been married long?

PERI What? We're not married!

ERIMEM Are you his concubine, then? Or a slave?

PERI I'm no slave – and I'm certainly nobody's concubine. The Doctor and I are friends, that's all.

ERIMEM Really? That is extraordinary.

PERI Men and women can't be friends here?

ERIMEM No. A woman's place is to serve her man.

PERI That's so... prehistoric!

ERIMEM I don't understand.

PERI I'm sorry. I keep forgetting where – when – I am. It's just that things are different where I come from.

ERIMEM Really? Tell me. Who rules you?

PERI Well, every four years the public decides who's going to run the country.

ERIMEM The ordinary people? All of them?

PERI Everybody. As long as they're adult, not in jail or mad. Well, then again...

ERIMEM Amazing. Tell...

PERI (*Cutting in – the conversation's getting awkward*) Do you mind if I ask how you came to be Pharaoh? I thought they were all men.

ERIMEM Usually they are, and I think most of my council of priests believe that only men should be Pharaoh.

PERI Rubbish. A woman can rule just as well as a man. Look at Margaret Thatcher. Well okay, maybe that's a bad analogy.³⁴ Indira Ghandi.

ERIMEM I do not understand, but I thank you anyway. (*She sighs*) A year ago I wouldn't have believed this possible.

PERI Why?

ERIMEM Back then I was little Princess Erimem. I was sixteen years old but to everyone I was still the little girl whose nose they had wiped. My father was Pharaoh and my three older half-brothers were more important than me, so I was left to my own devices.

PERI What happened?

ERIMEM First, my eldest brother was killed when the axle of his chariot snapped. It rolled over and landed on him.

PERI I'm sorry.

ERIMEM So am I. I think we were to have married one day.

PERI Your brother?

ERIMEM It is tradition. The royal line must be kept pure. But first he died, and then a fever took my youngest brother less than a month later. The last of my brothers was bitten by an asp inside his own rooms at the palace. He fought the poison for five days before it took him. I think a little of my father died with each of his sons. I wasn't surprised when he died six months after my eldest brother. Only that he allowed himself to be ambushed by mercenaries while out in his chariot. But he had been taking chances like he had never done before, as if he did not care any more.

PERI I'm sorry. Really.

ERIMEM Thank you. Now my only living relation is my mother but now she thinks I am a god and will not look me in the face.³⁵ She can barely talk to me.

PERI What do you think?

ERIMEM I think that a god would not have needed the Doctor to save her life twice in less than a day, and a god would not feel as afraid as I feel now.

PERI If it's any consolation, you're not alone there. Hey, it's broadening out.³⁶

ERIMEM At last.

PERI What is it?

ERIMEM A chapel for the women to worship their gods.

PERI More tapestries. And if my step-father saw that altar he'd think he was in heaven. He could get years of work out of the inscriptions alone.

ERIMEM It reaches back to the first dynasty.

PERI Can you hear that?

ERIMEM What?

PERI Listen.

Nothing at first, and then there is a sort of scraping sound. Very unnerving and creepy. Worse than fingers down the blackboard.

PERI That's the wind, right? Except that there's no wind down here.

ERIMEM There. At the door.

PERI Oh my God. Scorpions.

The sound of the scorpions scratching and rubbing against each other is loud and freaky. It really is weird and unsettling to listen to.

ERIMEM Hundreds of them.

PERI Thousands. They're everywhere. They're swarming.

ERIMEM They've blocked the doorway. We are trapped.

PERI Quick. Up on the altar.

ERIMEM That would be sacrilege.

PERI Better than the last rites. Come on. Climb up.

Sounds of them climbing up as well as the continuous sound of the scorpions.

PERI I've never seen anything like that. I thought scorpions were solitary animals.

ERIMEM They are. They even hate their own kind. Put two together and they will fight until one is dead.

PERI They're not fighting now. Can they climb?

ERIMEM I have never seen them do so.

PERI That's something. Oh, no.

ERIMEM What?

PERI They're climbing on top of each other like they're making a ramp.

ERIMEM I don't believe it. It will only take a few minutes for them to reach us.

PERI This isn't right. They shouldn't be acting like this. They shouldn't be smart enough to do this.

ERIMEM They're almost here.

PERI (*Desperately thinking*) How thick are those tapestries?

ERIMEM They're made of the hardest wearing wools.

PERI This is probably sacrilege as well. Grab the other end and pull.

ERIMEM It is stuck.

PERI Pull harder. Pull.

Sound of tapestry tearing and being pulled off the wall.

ERIMEM It's free.

PERI Throw it over the scorpions.

Sound of the tapestry flopping onto the scorpions.

ERIMEM You want us to run over the top of them?

PERI Do you have a better idea? Come on.

On top of the chittering and scraping of the scorpions we hear a set of sickly, crunching footsteps.

PERI Ugh! This is horrible.

ERIMEM The tapestry doesn't reach the door.

PERI It's only a few feet. We'll have to jump.

The sound of them jumping.

PERI Made it.

ERIMEM They are following us.

PERI And they're blocking the way back. We'll have to follow the passage to the other way out.

ERIMEM We don't know what will be waiting for us there.

PERI It can't be any worse than what's behind us.

ERIMEM I believe you have a point.

PERI This way. I think.

23. Yanis's camp.

YANIS bellows an outraged, angry yell.

YANIS Damn those witches, they have escaped.

KISHIK My lord?

Sound of KISHIK being grabbed by the gullet and choked.

YANIS Did I give you leave to speak, vermin?

More chokings and gurglings before KISHIK is tossed aside to land loudly and painfully.

YANIS These Egyptian milksops are weak with their women. Letting them run free, doing the work of men. I'll show those women how they should be treated, before I gut them and throw them to the crocodiles. *(Even louder)* Why are we not surrounding Thebes now?

24. The tunnels.

ERIMEM Is that light ahead?

PERI I hope so. The torches are almost dead. Still, they've done their job. We've outrun the scorpions

Sound of torches being chucked away.

PERI It's morning.

ERIMEM I have never seen a more beautiful sunrise.

PERI Me either. Where are we?

ERIMEM Give me a moment. Ah. There is the palace. We must be at the base of the Western hills.

PERI *(Shivering)* I wish we'd worn something warmer than these dresses. It's freezing out in the open.

ERIMEM The walk will soon warm us. There – I think I see the market opening in the city.

25. House Of Death. Int.

More moans and screams. The prisoner ANTRANAK ordered tortured is whimpering. He gasps for air and is obviously in a lot of pain. A priest is chanting quietly as he goes about his torturing.

PRIEST Im hishem ur tepmeram uvmet...

HOREMSHEP startles the PRIEST.

HOREMSHEP Is this the slave who tried to murder our Pharaoh? Has he spoken?

PRIEST No, Lord Horemshep. He is...

Sounds of a knife being unsheathed very quickly. There's a cutting sound and the PRIEST gurgles as his throat is cut. The prisoner whimpers optimistically.³⁷

HOREMSHEP Ssssh. Quietly. Don't be encouraged by my presence, you poor, poor fool. You are in no condition to escape, but I'm afraid you can't be interrogated either.

The prisoner gasps – sound of the knife being stuck into him.

HOREMSHEP After all, no one leaves the House of Death alive.

26. Thebes.

PERI and ERIMEM are heading back towards the Palace. The locals are vocal in their adoration.

PERI My mom could have a field day here.³⁸

ERIMEM How much are the dates?

STALLHOLDER Nothing. Nothing, Great One.

ERIMEM I would not deprive you of your livelihood. One of my hand-maidens will bring your payment later. Peri...?

PERI Thanks. I've never tried these for breakfast before. Can I ask a question?

ERIMEM Please.

PERI How do you deal with all this? The bowing and stuff.

ERIMEM Not very well, apparently. My father was always scolding me for not being regal enough. I shudder to think what he would say if he could see me now, walking among the people, like a commoner. But I do wish he was here. Then I would not have this... burden of duty on me.

PERI For what it's worth, you may just have invented one of the most important political tools ever – the walkabout.³⁹ Oh, there's Antranak. Ah, looks like we've been spotted.
Sound of feet running towards them.

ERIMEM A pity. I could learn to like walking through the market like a normal person.

ANTRANAK Great Pharaoh! You are safe.

ERIMEM Obviously.

PERI We're both safe. Thanks for asking.

ANTRANAK When you did not return, I sent dozens of men into the catacombs. They found only...

PERI Scorpions? We know. Can I see the Doctor?

ERIMEM Antranak, escort us to my chambers.

ANTRANAK As you command.
PERI How is he?
ANTRANAK Fayum is with him. When last I heard the Doctor's condition had not changed.⁴⁰ Still unconscious.
PERI But not dead. (*No answer*) He's not dead?
ANTRANAK Not as far as I know, although...
PERI Although what?
ERIMEM Tell us, old friend.
ANTRANAK I fear there are those in this city who would see him dead.
PERI Why? We only just got here.
ANTRANAK The Royal Court is a vipers' nest. That Pharaoh has shown the Doctor and you favour makes some of the court worry as to how secure their positions are. I know a number who would think nothing of removing him – whatever it took.
PERI You included?
ANTRANAK I am loyal to my Pharaoh.
ERIMEM And I am grateful. We are here.
Doors are pushed open.
PERI I hope he's okay. Where is he?
ANTRANAK Fayum? Fayum?
ERIMEM He's not here.
PERI Where is he? Doctor?⁴¹
ANTRANAK I left him here.
PERI He's not here now. Doctor? Doctor?
ERIMEM Antranak! How can the Doctor have disappeared?

END OF PART TWO⁴²

PART THREE

26 (cont). Erimem's chambers.

ANTRANAK Fayum? Fayum?
ERIMEM He's not here.
PERI Where is he? Doctor?⁴¹
ANTRANAK I left him here.
PERI He's not here now. Doctor? Doctor?
ERIMEM Antranak! How can the Doctor have disappeared?
ANTRANAK I... but...
ERIMEM I ordered that the Doctor be attended at all times. What happened?
ANTRANAK I will find out, Majesty.
PERI Doctor, where are you?
ANTRANAK I fear his whereabouts are of little importance. By now the poison will have run its course. He is dead.

27. Desert.

Sound of wind in the desert and a chariot rattling along. The charioteer is FAYUM.

FAYUM Sir, this is most unusual.
DOCTOR By now you've probably worked out that I'm a most unusual fellow, Fayum.
FAYUM Doctor, no ordinary man could survive the venom you were poisoned with – much less get up suddenly as if from sleep and ask for breakfast.
DOCTOR Yes, sorry about scaring you like that. There. On the horizon. Smoke from camp-fires. A good sized camp by the look of it. Pull the chariot into the oasis over there. I'll go on foot from here.
FAYUM I must go with you.
DOCTOR I'd rather go alone. It's bound to be dangerous.
FAYUM Pharaoh charged me with your well-being. I cannot leave you alone.
DOCTOR I assume I'd be wasting my time trying to change your mind? Very well.

28. Erimem's Chambers.

ERIMEM is trying to console PERI.

ERIMEM Don't worry, Peri. We will find him.
PERI But will he still be alive?
ERIMEM He is strong. I am sure...
ANTRANAK interrupts. He is agitated.
ANTRANAK Great Pharaoh.
ERIMEM What is it, Antranak?
PERI You've found the Doctor?
ANTRANAK Alas not. But our scouts have spied the army of mercenaries. They have surrounded Thebes to the south and the west.

They have sent a message demanding that we surrender immediately – or they will kill every man, woman and child in Egypt.

ERIMEM Our troops?

ANTRANAK Foot-soldiers and chariots of the army stand ready. As do my Palace Guard...

ERIMEM And the temple's troops? Antranak? Tell me.

ANTRANAK The council of priests is split over committing its troops.

PERI That's crazy.

ANTRANAK Perhaps, but once Erimem, forgive me, Pharaoh has led our troops in battle, the deliberations of the council concerning her right to the throne will be worthless. The people will never allow a victorious Pharaoh to be deposed.

PERI So they'd rather see their city destroyed by mercenaries than see Erimem crowned Pharaoh?

ERIMEM I do not think so, Peri. They are wily and cunning. They have waited like jackals for the moment to strike at me. Now we shall see what they plan.⁴³

ANTRANAK The council has asked that you attend the emergency council meeting which sits as we speak.

ERIMEM They summon me like I were a common serving girl.

PERI I didn't think anyone could order a Pharaoh to do anything. They must be feeling confident.

ANTRANAK It is an outrage. Give me the word and my men will cut that cabal of weasels into feed for the palace dogs.

ERIMEM No. Tell the priests that I will attend.

ANTRANAK But...

ERIMEM Do it, Antranak, or I will have someone else deliver the message.

ANTRANAK No, Highness. I will do it. But they will regret this insult. I swear it.

29. The desert.

The DOCTOR and FAYUM are still out in the desert, talking quietly. As they speak, we hear their movements through the dunes and over the sands.

DOCTOR The Nile's east and they have Thebes surrounded to the south and the west. Why not the north, I wonder? Unless you have a garrison to the north.

FAYUM A large one – at Giza.

DOCTOR I thought so. Whoever's in charge of this lot isn't stupid. If he'd sent men to the north they might have been sandwiched between the troops in Thebes and the garrison at Giza.

FAYUM We're lucky his men aren't so alert. I can hardly believe we slipped through their lines so easily.

DOCTOR Men who fight for money tend to be less attentive to duty than those who fight for honour or their beliefs. Now I'd guess that the camp is just over these dunes.

Sounds of them clambering up a dune.

DOCTOR Ah, there it is. Keep your head down.

FAYUM There must be thousands of mercenaries for the camp to be this size.

DOCTOR Well, look on the bright side – most of them are already in position to attack the city so they won't be here to worry about us.

FAYUM That's the bright side?
They keep moving, scrunching through the sand.

DOCTOR If they're in position I can't help wondering why they haven't attacked yet. Ah. That big tent at the centre must be their leader's. Come on. I want a look inside.

FAYUM Wouldn't it be wiser to fetch help?

DOCTOR Undoubtedly, but I've got this terrible feeling in my mind... never mind. We'll skirt the dunes as best we can. Stay low.
They move on.

DOCTOR A guard. Down.
A moment.

DOCTOR All right. Come on.

FAYUM You move like a spirit, Doctor. I did not think we would live this long.

DOCTOR I'm a little surprised myself. I thought the camp would be better guarded...

GUARD You! Who are you?⁴⁴

DOCTOR Why can't I keep my mouth shut?
The sound of an arrow being fired and hitting the GUARD. He gurgles, dying.

DOCTOR Fayum! Was that absolutely necessary?

FAYUM He would have raised the alarm.

DOCTOR From now on, use that bow only as a last resort. I came here to avoid bloodshed, not start it.

FAYUM I do not understand you, Doctor.

DOCTOR Just get that guard out of sight before he's spotted. He'll be missed before long. We'll have to look sharp. Quickly now. This is the one. It's empty. Inside.
Tent flaps shut behind them.

FAYUM Look at these jewels, Doctor. From all corners of the world.⁴⁵ And so much gold.

DOCTOR Evidently crime does pay. The spoils of previous campaigns, no doubt.

FAYUM Doctor, the blood on this armour...

DOCTOR Still fresh. This is interesting. Battlefield tents don't usually have a second room. I wonder what's through here. Very interesting indeed.
Flap opens.

FAYUM What... oh, that stench. It's like rotting meat.

DOCTOR I'm rather afraid it is. Human meat. Corpses behind this metal block. It must be a shrine of some kind.

FAYUM Human sacrifice? Some of these are wearing the uniforms of our chariot squadrons. This is no way for men to die. Look at them, left for the insects to feast on. Their souls will never find rest.

DOCTOR This metal block must be an altar. The markings are rather unusual, though. So is the metal, come to think of it. Definitely an alloy not developed yet. Let's have a proper look... oh, no.
The chattering sound of bugs and insects is becoming louder. Metallic scrape as the Doctor grabs a bit of metal.

DOCTOR I've seen all I need to, Fayum. Time we were going.

FAYUM What did you take from the altar?
DOCTOR This is no time for a discussion. Go.
Sound of a tent flap opening and of the DOCTOR and FAYUM stopping sharply.

YANIS Leaving already? You've barely sampled my hospitality.
DOCTOR If what's through there is any indication of how you treat guests, I'll pass if it's all the same with you.
YANIS You must be the fair-haired giant who saved Erimem.
FAYUM Show respect when you speak of Pharaoh.
YANIS Did I give you leave to speak?
Sound of a whip and FAYUM yelping.
YANIS Did I give you leave to bleed?
Another crack of the whip. Sound of FAYUM falling over, exclaiming in pain.
YANIS Or to fall over?
DOCTOR And who gave you leave to slaughter those men through there?
YANIS Interesting. You are in my tent, in the middle of my camp, surrounded by thousands of my men, yet you do not fear me. You should. You really should.
DOCTOR Perhaps. You should fear what you found in that stasis box through there.⁴⁶
YANIS Stasis box?
DOCTOR Yes, you're using it as an altar.
YANIS What do you know of such things, dog?
DOCTOR Doctor, actually. And I know it's best not to interfere with a stasis box when you find one – especially ones with prison markings on them.
YANIS You know a great deal more than you should.
DOCTOR So I've been told.
YANIS You are a dangerous enemy, Doctor. Too dangerous to remain alive. I shall take great pleasure in killing you myself.⁴⁷
DOCTOR Really? Danger's all in the mind, surely? But then, I imagine you've got rather a lot on your mind these days. Your thoughts, other people's thoughts.
YANIS What do you mean?
DOCTOR I had a rather long nap last night.⁴⁸ My mind went wandering and it sensed a presence nearby – a strong telepathic presence. The entity you discovered in the stasis box. Do you know exactly what it is?
YANIS Power. Power over men. Over their minds. The power to rule the world.
DOCTOR Yes, but who'll be ruling you, I wonder?
YANIS No one rules Yanis! I am warlord and I will have this world at my feet.
DOCTOR Rather lofty ambitions for a third rate bully.
YANIS I will cut your heart out and you will live just long enough to see me feast on it.
DOCTOR Not today thank you. We'll be going if it's all the same to you.
YANIS You have courage, Doctor.
DOCTOR I also have a little something I picked up from your stasis box there.

YANIS What is that?
Sounds of the DOCTOR fixing the bit of the stasis box he picked up earlier.

DOCTOR You don't know, do you? I imagine the presence in your mind recognises it. The telepathic inhibitor core circuits. A little bashed up but nothing that can't be mended by someone who knows what they're doing.

YANIS Stop. Put it down.

DOCTOR The little voice in your head getting nervous? Don't worry. It's perfectly harmless in the long run but if I do this...
High pitched sound effect followed by screams and yells from YANIS and his troops.

DOCTOR It does rather tend to disorient telepaths for a while.

FAYUM Let me kill him.

DOCTOR There's no time for that. Come on. Come on.
Tent flap opening. More wails and yells.

DOCTOR It's got better range than I anticipated but the effect won't last forever. Quickly. We'll take one of their chariots.
Sounds of them leaping onto a chariot and the reins being flicked.

FAYUM Hold on. Ha! Ha!

30. Yanis's tent.

The mercenaries are slowly recovering.

YANIS Up. On your feet. Up, before I grind your legs into the dirt.
He lurches through the tent flap. The chariot is thundering off.

YANIS After them. Do whatever you have to, but bring me the fair one alive. No one kills him but me. I will do it with my bare hands.

31. The chariot.

From the sound of it, the chariot is travelling at full pelt.

FAYUM We're through their lines.

DOCTOR We're not free yet. I make out three, no, four chariots following us.⁴⁹

FAYUM We have a good head start but they are more experienced with these chariots than I am.

DOCTOR We're still well out of range of their archers. Head for the oasis. Our own chariot is faster than this one and the horses will be fresher. They won't catch us.

FAYUM Ha! Faster! Faster!

DOCTOR Home, James, and never mind the horses. (*No response*)
 Never mind.

32. Erimem's chambers.

PERI and ERIMEM are in the chamber. ANTRANAK enters.

ANTRANAK My queen, it is almost time.

ERIMEM I know, Antranak. We had better not keep the priests waiting. Peri, will you come with me?

PERI I thought I might go and look for the Doctor again. But I guess you could do with a friend where you're going.

ERIMEM Thank you. Lead the way, Antranak.

33. The desert.

YANIS is receiving reports.

YANIS Well, Kishik? Are the men in position?
KISHIK Exactly as you commanded, Lord Yanis.
YANIS Order them to hold position.
KISHIK Hold? I thought we were to attack.
YANIS Are you as deaf as you are ugly and stupid? Hold! There are many ways to win a battle. Our ally in the city will try his way first.
KISHIK And if he fails?
YANIS *(Brightening and cheering up no end)* Then the Nile will run scarlet as Thebes drowns in torrents of its own blood. What a magnificent thought.

34. The Council Chamber.

The chamber is quiet bar a low murmur of conversation. Sound of the great doors opening.

ANTRANAK Daughter of the most high divine Pharaoh, link to the living Gods, Pharaoh in waiting, Erimemushinteperem, light of the...
ERIMEM Everyone here knows who I am, Antranak, and we have little enough time as it is.
ERIMEM sits.
ERIMEM *(Quietly)* I am glad you came, Peri. I think I have few friends in this room.
PERI They look like a pack of vultures.
ERIMEM Who summoned Pharaoh as if she were a slave?
HOREMSHEP I did, Highness.
ANTRANAK Horemshep. I hoped you would know better.
ERIMEM Let him speak. I trust that you have a good reason for your actions, Horemshep.
HOREMSHEP I believe that I do. Pharaoh is Egypt and Egypt is Pharaoh. Our land needs the rule of Pharaoh, the living God. Pharaoh rules all of our lives.
PERI That's why you called her like a dog?
HOREMSHEP *(Ignoring PERI totally)* Since the passing of her divine father, we have all believed that the Princess Erimem was the only heir to the throne of Pharaoh. But there is a doubt as to the right of a daughter to claim the position of Pharaoh, which has caused a delay in Erimem's coronation. Many days we have debated long into the night.
ANTRANAK Drunk long into the night, more like.
PERI And there have been female pharaohs before.
HOREMSHEP *(Annoyed with Peri but still blanking her)* But that changed when the assassin stated that there was another claim to the throne.
ERIMEM Does the council often listen to the claims of murderers, Horemshep?
HOREMSHEP No, but this claim was too important to be ignored. So we ordered an investigation.
PERI And you found something already? That's quick work, Kojak.
HOREMSHEP Who is this... concubine?

ERIMEM Peri is my friend. She speaks with me. Answer us, Horemshep. What is your evidence?

HOEMSHEP The proof was given to us by those who sought to hide it from Egypt. News of our investigation caused them to make a fatal mistake – by murdering an innocent woman in the Palace of Concubines.

PERI Varela was murdered? We assumed she'd committed suicide.

HOEMSHEP We have proof – and motive as well. The poison she took was very rare. Few in the city possess the skills required in its production and use. Tell us, Antranak, who in the palace understands the venoms of the serpents?

ANTRANAK The priests of the snake gods, apothecaries, and a few others.

HOEMSHEP Including certain of your guards.

ANTRANAK We have experts in the venoms but... wait... are you saying that one of my men killed Varela? If you are your proof had better be undeniable, or priest or not, you will answer to me.

HOEMSHEP I do not accuse one of your men, Antranak. I accuse you of the murder of Varela.

Uproar and bedlam. HOEMSHEP speaks louder to be heard.

HOEMSHEP Of the murder of Varela and of conspiring to keep the true Pharaoh of the two lands of Egypt from the throne.

ERIMEM Antranak?

ANTRANAK Lies. All lies from that weasel. I'll kill him with my bare hands.

HOEMSHEP Hold him.

ANTRANAK Release me. Let me go.

PERI I don't believe it. Erimem... *(no answer)* Erimem? Pharaoh!

ERIMEM *(Shocked, shaken)* I know Antranak is protective of me. He has been ever since I was a child. And I heard him threaten you at the Palace of Concubines, although I pretended not to. But he would not do this, surely? No. I don't believe it either. And yet... I know he would do anything to protect me.

Sound of the doors being thrown open and a commotion from outside.

FAYUM Let him pass. He carries the cartouche of Pharaoh.

DOCTOR Sorry to barge in like this. Have we missed anything?

PERI Doctor, you're all right.

DOCTOR I will be if you let go. You're crushing my ribs.

PERI I thought you were dead.

HOEMSHEP As did we all.

DOCTOR No thanks. I've tried death a few times. Can't say I care for it much.

PERI But the poison...

DOCTOR My body just put me into a deep sleep while it worked the poison from my system. Best night's sleep I've had in centuries.⁵⁰

HOEMSHEP Alive or dead, you have no place here, stranger.

ERIMEM The Doctor is also here as my counsel. Join us Doctor.

DOCTOR I'm honoured, Pharaoh. So, what's this all about?

PERI Horemshep's accused Antranak of poisoning a concubine to make sure she didn't tell anyone that Erimem isn't really heir to the throne.

DOCTOR Really? Has he said who is?

PERI Not yet.

DOCTOR Interesting timing for this to happen. Majesty, may I ask a few questions?

ERIMEM Of course.

DOCTOR Horemshep, what proof do you have against Antranak?

HOREMSHEP As I have already stated, there are only a handful of people within the palace with the expertise to handle such a rare venom as killed Varela. The rooms and houses of everyone with that expertise were investigated by my palace guard.

DOCTOR And the poison was found in Antranak's chambers?

HOREMSHEP A vial with just enough missing to have killed Varela.

DOCTOR How did he give the poison to Varela? As I recall, men aren't allowed in the Palace of Concubines.

HOREMSHEP Antranak knows all the secret entrances and passages in Thebes. Even yesterday he told Erimem of the existence of a secret passage. And he was seen moving away from the Palace of Concubines only an hour before the Lady Varela was found dead in the gardens.

ANTRANAK It's my duty to oversee security there, idiot.

HOREMSHEP Is it your duty to murder innocent women?

DOCTOR So let me get this right. Antranak slipped into the Palace of Concubines, poisoned the Lady Varela, then went back to his own chambers and hid the incriminating evidence there, ready for your guards to find? Careless of him. Almost unbelievably so.

HOREMSHEP Do you call me a liar, outsider?

DOCTOR No, no, no. Absolutely not. Well, not yet. Why would an intelligent man like Antranak leave the poison in his own rooms? Why not simply throw it in the Nile? Or put it in someone else's chambers? To incriminate an innocent, for instance.

HOREMSHEP Ask him yourself.

DOCTOR I'd rather ask you. And I'd be interested in knowing who ordered the search of Antranak's quarters. It wouldn't have been you by any chance would it?

HOREMSHEP It was a council decision.

DOCTOR But whose idea? Yours? Yes? Interesting. The other question is why? Why would Antranak kill an innocent woman? If he had a motive, let's hear it.

HOREMSHEP Who are you to speak to Horemshep, Priest of Horus, leader of the council of...

DOCTOR I'm someone seeking the truth. Who are you? Motive - if you don't mind.

HOREMSHEP The reason for this cruel murder was discovered in the personal belongings of the Lady Varela. As we know, she was a wife of our beloved Pharaoh, who travelled to the west only a season ago. Among her possessions were letters written to her by her great husband.

DOCTOR That's hardly surprising. What was in the letters that was important enough to cost Varela her life?

HOREMSHEP The letters told of Varela's love for her husband, of her devotion to him... and of the son she bore him in secret.

Uproar - HOREMSHEP has really played to the galleries.

ERIMEM A brother?

PERI And he would claim the throne just because he's male.

ERIMEM By law, all male children are ahead of females in the line of succession.

HOREMSHEP Pharaoh fathered another son, older by three years than Erimem, and the true Pharaoh of Egypt. As a so-called friend of Pharaoh, Antranak knew of the child and sought to keep his existence secret so that Erimem could rule as Pharaoh – with his counsel.

ANTRANAK Lies. All of it.

HOREMSHEP Antranak has betrayed his duty to Egypt and the trust of his Pharaoh.

DOCTOR I don't suppose you happen to know where this Pharaoh is?

HOREMSHEP He is here, Doctor. In this room.

DOCTOR I thought he might be. You'd better tell us who he is before the crowd gets restless.

HOREMSHEP Taken from Varela at birth, he was raised by one of the priests as his own. It is ironic that he and Erimem played together as children. He recently entered this council as a respected junior member, but now we will serve him. Fayum is the true Pharaoh.
Even more uproar.

FAYUM What?

HOREMSHEP Step forward, mighty Fayum, and take the throne.

FAYUM You're wrong.⁵¹ I'm not Pharaoh. I'm just a priest.

HOREMSHEP You are the son of a living god. You are our most high Pharaoh.

FAYUM I'm nothing. I don't want to be Pharaoh. Get your hands off me.

HOREMSHEP (*Voice a bit guttural and odd*) Embrace your destiny. This is what you were born for.

FAYUM My head. It feels... there's something... a voice. Voices.

DOCTOR (*To himself*) So that's how it works.

HOREMSHEP You have a duty, Great Fayum. You know what you must do.
FAYUM now speaks differently – stronger and firmer.

FAYUM I know what must be done.

ANTRANAK Fayum what is this nonsense?

HOREMSHEP Step down, Erimem. Step down and kneel before the true Pharaoh, the mighty Fayum, ruler of the Two Lands of Egypt. Kneel, all of you.
General sounds of kneeling, scuffling, grovelling and abasing.

HOREMSHEP Move, girl, or be moved.

DOCTOR Stay where you are, Erimem. Is this the best proof you have, Horemshep? A bottle of poison and some old letters? Hardly conclusive, are they?

HOREMSHEP They are enough.

DOCTOR And jolly lucky for you that they were just lying about.

HOREMSHEP The Gods favour us by showing us the truth.

FAYUM This is indeed the truth.

DOCTOR Really? Fayum, I must say you've changed your tune. One moment you don't want to be Pharaoh, the next you have to do your duty. You changed your mind quickly – and literally too, I imagine.

HOREMSHEP You have interfered enough. Stand aside or be killed.

DOCTOR Why doesn't Fayum move me?

FAYUM As you wish.
FAYUM suddenly falls back, gasping.

HOREMSHEP What are you?
DOCTOR More than a match for Fayum, it seems. Mind over matter, wouldn't you say?
HOREMSHEP Guards! Kill him.
DOCTOR Wait. I can prove that Erimem is the true Pharaoh.
HOREMSHEP You lie!
DOCTOR I leave that to the experts. You claim your proof is from the gods. Then let the gods choose who should be Pharaoh.
HOREMSHEP The gods have chosen.
DOCTOR Ask Ra, the Sun God, if he favours Fayum.
ERIMEM Peri, what is he doing?
PERI I don't know. Doctor...
DOCTOR Shh, Peri.
PERI But...
DOCTOR Look, this is a telepathic inhibitor circuit. If I just reverse the inhibitor cache control and... there we are.
PERI Doctor...
DOCTOR Quiet. I need to concentrate. Now, get him to ask the question.
PERI Ask your god, Horemshep - or are you scared of the answer?
HOREMSHEP Great Ra, bringer of life, shine your favour on the true living god, Fayum.
Screams and uproar.
ANTRANAK Ra is gone. The sky is dark. Ra has abandoned Fayum.
DOCTOR (*Straining*) Erimem, command the sun to return.
ERIMEM Doctor, I cannot...
DOCTOR Do it. I can't keep this up much longer.
PERI Trust him. Please. Do it.
ERIMEM Very well. Great Ra, return to our skies. Bring light and life back to our lands.
Sounds of awe and shock.
ANTRANAK Ra has returned. Only a living God can command the sun.
ERIMEM I don't believe it.
HOREMSHEP Don't believe them! It's a trick.
The crowd is now behind ERIMEM. They're chanting her name.
PERI (*Quietly*) What was that? An eclipse?
DOCTOR (*Quietly*) Not quite. You remember when the TARDIS was jolted then I said I'd reprogrammed it?
PERI (*Quietly*) Yes.
DOCTOR (*Quietly*) I just did. Telepathically. I reversed these inhibitor circuits I found in Yanis' tent to extend my range a little. Rather a useful little bit of equipment. At least now we know who brought us here.
PERI (*Quietly*) You had the TARDIS block out the sun? Can it do that?
DOCTOR (*Quietly*) You've no idea what the TARDIS can do when she has a mind to. She'd get to just the right distance for the right effect and, so long as it wasn't for more than a few seconds, well, instant eclipse.

PERI (Quietly) All that shaking about in the TARDIS earlier? The heat... that was just now?

DOCTOR (Quietly) Yes, we're here and we were just up there, too.

PERI (Quietly) I think Horemshep's going to have a fit, by the way...

HOREMSHEP It's a trick. A lie.

DOCTOR The lies are yours, Horemshep. You had Varela poisoned. She was an easy target – a woman depressed and distressed by the death of her husband. She would easily trust the Priest of Horus. You forged the letters found in her rooms. You planted the evidence on Antranak. You even arranged for the assassination attempt on Erimem so that you could put Fayum or anyone else you could manipulate on the throne. Then what? Murder Fayum and take the throne yourself with the help of the mercenaries outside the city?⁵²

ERIMEM Release Antranak.

ANTRANAK Traitorous dog! The beetles will eat you alive for this.

DOCTOR First things first, however. We need to know the details of his arrangement with Yanis' mercenaries.

ERIMEM Is this true, Horemshep? It is. I see it in your face.

DOCTOR What other reason is there for Yanis not attacking yet? The mercenaries stayed outside the city as a constant visible threat, while Horemshep here stirred up trouble inside the Palace. But there's more to it than that now, isn't there, Horemshep?

Sound of a sword being drawn.

HOREMSHEP Indeed there is! Fayum!

PERI yelps as she's grabbed.

DOCTOR Peri!

ERIMEM Release her, Fayum.

FAYUM Give us free passage from the city or I open the girl's throat to the bone.

ANTRANAK You will never leave this room alive, boy.

DOCTOR He means it, Antranak. Let them go.

ERIMEM Do it.

ANTRANAK (Reluctantly) Let them pass.

DOCTOR Don't provoke them.

HOREMSHEP Very wise, stranger. Your strength and intelligence will be of great use to us when we take the city.

FAYUM We will take a chariot. Keep well back or the girl dies.

Doors open, PERI dragged out.

ERIMEM Doctor... what now? I am...

DOCTOR Confused, have a hundred questions to ask and don't know what to do next?

ERIMEM Yes.

DOCTOR The first thing is to mobilise every soldier you have – and every chariot. I think war's about to be declared – and I don't want Peri on their side of the lines when the fighting starts.

(NB: NO SCENE 35)

36. The chariot.

Peri is struggling and fighting. The chariot starts to move as:

FAYUM Ha! Ha!

HOREMSHEP Stop struggling, girl.

PERI Not on your life. Once you're clear of the city, you don't need a hostage.

HOREMSHEP You have a sharp mind.

PERI And a hard knee.

HOREMSHEP *groans as we hear PERI knee him. Probably somewhere really sore.*

HOREMSHEP (In a considerable amount of pain) Stop!

PERI Not a chance.

Sound of PERI leaping off the chariot. She hits the ground hard. She coughs and splutters as feet run towards her. The chariot rattles off into the distance.

DOCTOR Peri, are you all right? You could have been killed jumping off a chariot moving that fast.

PERI I think I swallowed half the desert. And a few cuts and bruises.⁵³ Nothing that kicking those two where it hurts won't cure.

DOCTOR Nothing wrong with your temper anyway.

ERIMEM Peri, I'm glad you're safe. Antranak, how long until all our troops can be mobilised?

ANTRANAK My men are already armed and waiting. The temple guards and chariots need only a few minutes.⁵⁴

DOCTOR Good. Tell them to head for the North Gate.

PERI What are you planning, Doctor?

DOCTOR I'll tell you after you've let Erimem's doctor look at those cuts. The last thing we need is you catching an infection. Now, Antranak, the mercenaries outnumber the troops in the city. If we fight here, we'll lose.

ANTRANAK Are you saying we should run like cowards?

DOCTOR Nothing of the sort. I'm saying we should head for Giza and meet up with the garrison there. It should take a while for the mercenaries to follow us.

ANTRANAK After they've laid waste to Thebes. Pharaoh, let me lead an attack on the mercenary camp. I will wipe them from the face of your kingdoms.

DOCTOR You'll be slaughtered inside an hour. Erimem, you must trust me.

ERIMEM You have never failed me, Doctor, but neither has Antranak. Whatever decision I make, good people are going to die.

PERI Trust the Doctor, your Majesty. Please.

ERIMEM Very well. Assemble the troops at the North Gate, Antranak - and no arguments. Have them ready for a hard, quick march to Giza.

ANTRANAK As you wish, Mighty One. I hope you know what you are doing, Doctor.

DOCTOR So do I.

37. The desert outside Thebes.

The mercenaries are in position. FAYUM and HOREMSHEP's chariot clatters to a stop.

FAYUM Whoa.

YANIS So you failed, Horemshep. I knew you would.
HOREMSHEP I thought you would be pleased, Yanis. Now you will have your battle.
YANIS And this is?
FAYUM I am Fayum.
YANIS I remember you. So, this pup you plan to put on the throne?⁵⁵ You should have told me, boy. I wouldn't have whipped you so hard.
FAYUM That is unimportant now. All that matters is taking Thebes.
HOREMSHEP And the Doctor.
YANIS My troops are prepared. Only the fair-haired stranger is to be taken alive.
HOREMSHEP Yes, the Doctor must not be harmed...
YANIS No one touches him – he is mine. Attack now. I want to be knee-deep in Egyptian blood before the hour is out – then I'll bed the brat Pharaoh herself.⁵⁶ Before I open her guts to the jackals. Attack! I can taste the blood already.
Cheers and yells as the troops charge. Chariots sound.

38. Thebes.

The North Gate. ANTRANAK is reporting to ERIMEM.

ANTRANAK The troops are prepared, Pharaoh, but the mercenaries are moving on the city... But the men do not want to leave Thebes unguarded.⁵⁷
ERIMEM We go north.
DOCTOR And we'd better get going.
PERI Doctor, wait. Are the troops really abandoning the city? The people are terrified.
DOCTOR Not so much abandoning as making a strategic withdrawal, north, to Giza. I assume you're joining us?
PERI You think I want to be here when those mercenaries come knocking? No thanks. I'm with you.
DOCTOR I thought you'd say that. You'll travel with Antranak.
PERI You've got it all planned.
DOCTOR One tries.
PERI Where will you be?
DOCTOR Well, I'll be with Pharaoh.
ERIMEM I will need the Doctor's counsel a great deal in the coming days.
DOCTOR I think we'd better get moving, don't you?
ERIMEM Antranak, begin the march. Open the gates. Forward!
Great gates creak open. The chariots and soldiers move off.

39. Desert outside Thebes.

The soldiers are attacking. Yelling, screaming.

YANIS Where are they, Horemshep? You told me they would be waiting to die.
HOREMSHEP Their troops are ready. Don't be so eager for battle.
YANIS I live for battle, imbecile, and your Egyptian troops

threaten to deprive me of it. We are within sight of their gate and they have yet to fire a single arrow.

FAYUM It could be a trap. The Doctor is a cunning enemy.

YANIS Kishik? Come here, dog!

KISHIK My Lord Yanis, the rest of our men report the same – none of them have seen any soldiers because...

YANIS Where are they...?

KISHIK ...the Egyptian troops are leaving the city. They're marching to Giza.

HOREMSHEP Call off the attack.

YANIS But the city is unguarded. We can take it easily.

FAYUM There is a greater prize than the city.

40. The trail to Giza.

The DOCTOR and ERIMEM's chariot rattles along with others doing the same in the background. A chariot closes noisily. It's ANTRANAK – and he's excited.

ANTRANAK Pharaoh. Pharaoh.

ERIMEM What is it, Antranak? The mercenaries?

ANTRANAK Our rear scouts report that the mercenaries have ignored Thebes and are following us – with their slower chariots, they are half a day behind us.

ERIMEM Doctor?⁵⁸

ANTRANAK You planned this.⁵⁹ You knew that they would follow us and the city would be safe. I misjudged you, Doctor.⁶⁰ You are a true warrior.

DOCTOR Maybe you should think about strengthening our rear defences? Our chariots are faster than theirs but they might try a sneak attack. Hit and run, trying to pick off a few men at a time.

ANTRANAK I will see to it now.

His chariot clatters off.

ERIMEM Thank you. It's a great relief that Thebes is safe. Your plan worked. Why do you seem so troubled?

DOCTOR Because it confirms what I suspected. They knew what we were doing. It couldn't have been their scouts. They reacted too quickly for that. I'm afraid there's a spy among us.

ERIMEM Who? Tell me and I will have their heart cut out.

DOCTOR I'd rather you didn't. You see, I think their spy is Peri.

END OF PART THREE

PART FOUR

40 (cont). Trail to Giza.

ERIMEM It's a great relief that Thebes is safe.⁶¹ Your plan worked. Why do you seem so troubled?

DOCTOR Because it confirms what I suspected. They knew what we were doing. It couldn't have been their scouts. They reacted too quickly for that. I'm afraid there's a spy among us.

ERIMEM Who? Tell me and I will have their heart cut out.

DOCTOR I'd rather you didn't. You see, I think their spy is Peri.

ERIMEM Peri? You must be wrong.

DOCTOR I wish I was, but I don't think so.

ERIMEM Then she must be interrogated.

DOCTOR Before you do anything, I think I should tell you exactly what we're facing.⁶² You may find this hard to believe but I promise you that every word is true.

ERIMEM Tell me.

DOCTOR When I went to the mercenary camp I found a stasis box from a prison ship - it's like a cell for special prisoners.

ERIMEM What kind?

DOCTOR In this case, the kind who can affect the minds of others. A creature of pure mental energy. It must have been freed when the prison ship crashed.

ERIMEM How can such a creature exist?

DOCTOR It's like a virus - an infection, reproducing itself as it passes onto another victim. All of them linked telepathically, so that the creature gets the knowledge of everyone it infects as well as control of their bodies. One vast mind with an army of hosts. Initially, the hold will be quite weak and some of the host's personality will stay. The stronger the host mind, the longer it will take to gain control but as time passes, the host will be destroyed to make way for this creature.

ERIMEM What would it want?

DOCTOR The same as every other creature in the galaxy - to survive, to reproduce. Evolution has made it a parasite. It needs the lives of others to carry on living. I wondered how it was passed on - but when I saw the change in Fayum after Horemshep grabbed him I realised it must be by touch.

ERIMEM Who are you to know of these things, Doctor?⁶³ No, Horemshep asked, what are you? You are not a normal man. You have fought off fatal poison and turned the sky black but I do not believe you are a god any more than I am because I don't believe in any of our gods.

DOCTOR You don't?

ERIMEM I believe in... real things. I have heard of men who study the stars and say that we travel round the sun not it round us. One of these men even claims that the world is round like a ball.

DOCTOR Does he indeed?

ERIMEM There are other men who study plants or animals or rivers, or make extraordinary devices with wood and metals. You are like them but not exactly the same. I can't explain it.

DOCTOR I wish I could tell you.
ERIMEM Then do.
DOCTOR I'm... just a traveller.
ERIMEM Then tell me of your travels. That can do no harm.
DOCTOR Perhaps one day I shall. For now we have Peri to worry about.
ERIMEM Peri. This creature was passed to her by touch.
DOCTOR When Fayum had her hostage. She's strong-willed, but soon they'll know everything she knows. We must make sure she hears nothing of our plans when we make camp tonight.

41. Antranak's chariot.

The chariot is clattering along. PERI groans.

ANTRANAK Lady Peri, are you ill?
PERI Just a little disoriented for a minute, Antranak. How far are we from Giza?
ANTRANAK We will be there by tomorrow afternoon.
PERI How long till we make camp tonight?
ANTRANAK We will travel until dark and be gone in the morning with the first light.
PERI How big is the garrison at Giza?
ANTRANAK A hundred chariots and around eight hundred men. Lady, why do you ask so many questions?
PERI Just curious. Do you worry that your chariots have a weak spot?
ANTRANAK You have no need to fear an attack, Lady. We are well clear of the mercenaries.
PERI But you must be worried that their chariots have heavier armour. Or do you have a plan for getting round that?⁶⁴

(NB: NO SCENE 42)

43. The desert behind the advancing Egyptian army.

YANIS, HOREMSHEP, KISHIK and FAYUM are gathered, listening to PERI's conversation with ANTRANAK.

HOREMSHEP The girl's mind is opening to us. That idiot Antranak will tell her everything we need to know.
FAYUM She must be wary, Horemshep. If she asks too many questions he will become suspicious.
YANIS Eight hundred men, Fayum? Is that all they can muster? Make it four thousand and they would still be slaughtered within the hour.
KISHIK They will reach Giza half a day before us, my Lords.
FAYUM They will use the time to prepare.
YANIS Let them prepare. They will be trampled into the sand.
FAYUM The Doctor must not be harmed.
YANIS I will cut a channel through their troops to him myself.
FAYUM What is he?
HOREMSHEP Her mind is not yet completely clear to us. She is not sure but... they travel in space. If he has a craft we will be free to colonise other worlds again.

YANIS And to conquer them.⁶⁵

44. The desert. Night.

Sounds of the camp at rest. Fires crackle and troops move around in the background. Food is being eaten and the troops talk and laugh.

ANTRANAK Set sentries round the camp at ten paces apart and stay alert. There you are, Doctor. Do army rations agree with you?

DOCTOR I've had worse, Antranak. Not hungry, Peri?

PERI What? No.

ERIMEM You should try to eat something. Tomorrow will be another long march. And then there will be the battle.

DOCTOR (*Cutting in*) Here, try this.

PERI I said I'm not hungry.

DOCTOR I insist. Doctor's orders. It'll do you the world of good. You've been looking rather peaky. We'll discuss the battle after we've eaten.

PERI (*Chewing*) What is this?

DOCTOR Actually, it's probably best that you don't ask.

PERI (*Becoming woozy*) It tastes... it's...

Sound of PERI hitting the deck.

DOCTOR It's all right, Peri. The heat and travel have just got to you. Peri? Out like a light.

ANTRANAK I will help you carry her to her tent.

ERIMEM No, don't touch her. What did you put in her food, Doctor?

DOCTOR A little something I got from your physician. She'll be as right as ninepence in the morning. Well, as close as she can be in the situation.⁶⁶ I'm going to get some blankets - we mustn't move her. Would you mind explaining things to Antranak?

ANTRANAK Let me help...

ERIMEM No. Sit with me, old friend. I have a strange tale to tell you. *The DOCTOR's footsteps head away, leaving ERIMEM's voice fading.*

ERIMEM We face a strange enemy, Antranak, like none even you have seen. A strange creature...

45. The desert, back a little way.

The mercenaries are still following, but a chariot clatters to a stop. Another chariot rattles up and stops quickly.

YANIS Horemshep, why are we stopping? If we carry on through the night we will be close enough to attack by dawn.

HOREMSHEP And the men will be too tired for battle, Yanis. We will make camp here for the night, Fayum. Pass on the order.

FAYUM As you wish, Horemshep

YANIS They would cross a river of burning oil if I ordered them.

FAYUM And finish as dead as they would if we marched through the night. We need living hosts not corpses.

YANIS Cowards. You are not fit for the prize ahead of us. Enjoy your sleep. I'll set sentries for the night. Kishik? To me, you dog, to me! *His chariot rattles off.*

FAYUM Yanis is dangerous, Horemshep. His will is strong. Control over his mind is limited. We should kill him.

HOREMSHEP In time he will be with us fully. Until then we must curb his violent ideas.

FAYUM And if he continues to resist our will?

HOREMSHEP Then we will remove our presence from his mind before his body is killed.

46. Desert. Next morning.

The chariot clattering through the desert.

ERIMEM We should be within sight of the tombs of my ancestors any time now.

DOCTOR You're remarkably bright today, Majesty, especially given how late you had me tell stories last night.

ERIMEM Your stories cheer me, Doctor. They give me some hope that our cause is not so desperate. After all, we do not face, what was it, Daleks? And Cybermen? And -

DOCTOR Yes, well, I think I may have said a little more than I intended. Ah. There. The pyramids. No matter how often I see them they never fail to impress.

ERIMEM Can you believe they are hundreds of years old?

DOCTOR They're built to last - the Sphinx even more so.

ERIMEM I have often wondered whose face is on the Sphinx. My teacher believed it was Cheops.

DOCTOR Definitely not Cheops - although I have heard some bizarre stories about him.

ERIMEM Would it surprise you to know that I am terrified, Doctor?

DOCTOR I'd be surprised if you weren't.

ERIMEM Doctor, last night, you told stories of many times and places...⁶⁷ Do you really know all these things? Do you know what will happen in the battle today? (*No answer*) What will happen to me?

DOCTOR Even if I knew exactly what happens today, I couldn't change it. Whoa there.⁶⁸

The chariot stops. They both get off, jumping onto the sand.

DOCTOR Down you come.⁶⁹

ERIMEM I will die today.

DOCTOR I didn't say that.

ERIMEM Your face did.

DOCTOR I don't know that you'll die.

ERIMEM But I will never be Pharaoh. You told Peri that you knew the names of every Pharaoh. I am not one of them.

DOCTOR I'm sorry.

ERIMEM It's strange - I'm not surprised. I have always been sure that I would never be Pharaoh. Perhaps I do have a destiny after all. But a different one than I expected.

Another chariot pulls up.

ANTRANAK Majesty, your troops at Giza wait to greet you.

DOCTOR So, Peri, how are you feeling now?

PERI Fine now. Are those barriers the best you have?

DOCTOR I'm sorry?

PERI I mean, those wooden barriers won't hold off their heavy chariots for long.

ERIMEM They will have to. They are the best we can manage in such a short time.

ANTRANAK Majesty, the sentries have spotted the enemy massing just over the high dunes to the south.

DOCTOR Five miles or so. Resting before the attack, I imagine, which should give me just enough time.

PERI Time for what?

DOCTOR A quick stroll under the Sphinx.

ANTRANAK Impossible. There's no way into the Sphinx.

DOCTOR Actually, there is. There's a well four hundred metres directly behind the Sphinx.⁷⁰

ANTRANAK Useless thing.⁷¹ Dry as dust. A few of the locals throw scraps in it. They believe it's home to sacred cats who drank all the water in it.

DOCTOR I don't know about the cats but there's no water there because it's not a well at all. It's a sink-shaft used by the people who built the Sphinx. It leads under the Sphinx and branches off under the pyramids as well, come to that, but it's the Sphinx I'm interested in.⁷²

PERI Why? What's under there?

DOCTOR Well, contrary to the common belief of your time, the Sphinx is much older than the pyramids, dating back to around ten thousand BC.

ERIMEM BC?

DOCTOR Another time. Anyway, the Sphinx was built by refugees from Atlantis, who placed all their knowledge in a chamber between the paws of the Sphinx – the Hall of Records.⁷³ We'll find what we need to beat the mercenaries and their infection down there.

ANTRANAK How can you know all this? These tombs are at least a thousand summers old.

DOCTOR Well, I am a little older than I look. Right, I'd better get started. Peri, you stay by the river. If things go badly, there'll be boats heading for safety.

PERI I'd rather stick with you.

DOCTOR Well, if you're sure...

ERIMEM Good luck, Doctor.

DOCTOR And to you. To all of us.

47. The desert outside Giza.

FAYUM If there is a weapon, he cannot be allowed to find it.

YANIS How can he be so old?

HOREMSHEP He is an alien and a time traveller.

FAYUM The girl has heard of Atlantis. He must be stopped. We must attack immediately.

HOREMSHEP The troops are still weary after the long march.⁷⁴

YANIS They fear me more than death. (*Bellowing*) You've rested long enough, pigs. Rouse yourselves. We attack now!

48. Giza.

ANTRANAK and ERIMEM are ready and waiting.

ANTRANAK They are beginning their attack.

ERIMEM Our troops know what they must do?
ANTRANAK Avoid hand to hand contact with the enemy at all cost.⁷⁵
 This is a dishonourable enemy. One that hides out of sight within others.
ERIMEM But it is still an enemy to be defeated. If we all play our part.
ANTRANAK Pharaoh, what are you doing?
Sound of ERIMEM putting on a heavy crown – more a helmet, really.
ERIMEM I did not bring the battle crown for show and I cannot ask my men to go into battle while I watch safely from a distance. I am proficient with the bow and battle spear. You were a good teacher. I will lead the attack.
ANTRANAK Your father would be proud of you.
ERIMEM Only if we win the day.
ANTRANAK Pharaoh? Their chariots!
ERIMEM Do it.
ANTRANAK Archers, ready... Ready... Fire!
The sound of the chariots is getting closer then volley of arrows whistles away.

49. The desert.

YANIS, FAYUM and HOREMSHEP are observing the battle.

FAYUM Their archers are cutting our chariots down like cattle, Horemshep, while ours hit only those barricades.
HOREMSHEP The chariots are almost too close for the archers now – and we still have enough to over-run them.⁷⁶
YANIS Kishik's infantry will break through their lines easily. And then the Doctor will be ours. Infantry, forward!

50. The sink shaft.

PERI and the DOCTOR are climbing down ropes. Their voices echo in the shaft.

DOCTOR You know, this shaft is deeper than I remember. How are you doing with the ropes? (*No answer*) Peri? I asked...
PERI Fine, Doctor. How much further?
DOCTOR These torches don't give much light, but it shouldn't be far now. Ah. There we are. Careful. Another ten feet... five... there. *He drops to the ground. PERI lands next to him. We hear meowing cats. One is louder than the rest.*
DOCTOR Well, there are definitely cats here. Hello, puss. *The cat spits and hisses, scratching the DOCTOR.*
DOCTOR Ow. Not house-trained obviously.
PERI This way?
DOCTOR When it branches, we go straight on. Keep your torch up – there's no way of knowing what sort of damage time has done down here. These tunnels are millennia old. The slightest disturbance could cause a cave-in.

51. Giza.

The chariots are much closer. Arrows still whistle out from the archers.

ANTRANAK Their chariots are too close for the archers to be of any effect now, Pharaoh.

ERIMEM Have the archers concentrate on their foot-soldiers. The chariots are our task now.

ANTRANAK Archers, target their infantry. Chariot squadrons, attack in formation now!

The Egyptian chariots speed off to meet the attacking mercenary chariots.

52. The desert.

YANIS and his troops are charging forward. His chariot clatters forward.

KISHIK My Lord, we are winning

YANIS Of course, Kishik. These Theben dogs are weak!

KISHIK Forward. Cut them to pieces! Slice through – uh

Kishik is hit by an arrow

YANIS Kishik!⁷⁷ You will be avenged! Kill them all, kill them all!

FAYUM No, Yanis! We need them alive. Yanis!

53. The battle at Giza.

The battle is joined. It's loud and violent. Swords clash, chariots clatter across the battlefield. Soldiers yell and scream as they are cut down.

ANTRANAK and ERIMEM hold a yelled conversation as they continue fighting – thrusting with sword and spear.

ANTRANAK They are pushing us back, Majesty.

ERIMEM Hold the line. The Doctor needs more time.

ANTRANAK We need the foot-soldiers.⁷⁸ They could become infected but we'll be overrun in minutes without them.

ERIMEM Very well. Bring forward the infantry.

ANTRANAK Majesty. INFANTRY FORWARD!

ERIMEM Let's hope we give the Doctor the time he needs.

Loud yells and cheers as the infantry run into battle. Swords clash and men scream.

FAYUM Over there. It's Erimem.⁷⁹

YANIS She fights like a demon.

HOREMSHEP The Doctor. Concentrate on finding the Doctor!

YANIS roars disapproval. The battle continues. Loud and bloody.

ANTRANAK Majesty – Fayum and Yanis! They're heading for the shaft. But where's Horemshep?

ERIMEM No matter, we must stop them. Go back for the infantry, Antranak! The Doctor needs my help. Send soldiers down after me when they get here.

Sound of an arrow hitting ANTRANAK. He falls to the desert, with a cough.

ANTRANAK Majes-

HOREMSHEP I fear he will be passing no messages for you.

ERIMEM Horemshep, I should have expected a coward like you to attack from behind.

YANIS I'll open her for the buzzards.

HOREMSHEP No, Yanis. The Doctor values her life. But if she attempts to escape break her arm. Erimem, you planned to join the Doctor below. We will all go down together.

54. The tunnel under the Sphinx.

Footsteps in sand and the occasional meow of a cat.

DOCTOR These tunnels stretch further than I remember. Maybe I'm just not as young as I was. Or the cats have been busy digging.

PERI What are the inscriptions on the pillars?

DOCTOR The potted history of Atlantis and prayers that the people and knowledge of Atlantis will be remembered.⁸⁰

PERI What wisdom? Is it the weapon you're looking for?

DOCTOR There are lots of different kinds of weapons, Peri. Not far now. Ah. There we are.

PERI A blank wall?

DOCTOR Only to those who don't know what they're looking for. It's the door to the hall of records. Hold the torch steady.

PERI Open it.

DOCTOR All in good time. This door hasn't been opened in eight and a half thousand years. It's not the sort of thing you want to rush.

HOREMSHEP Open it, Doctor.

DOCTOR Horemshep. I was wondering when you would turn up. And you too, Fayum.

HOREMSHEP Open the door. We must have the weapon.

DOCTOR Hand over a weapon to a grubby little mind parasite like you - and a criminal to boot? I don't think so, somehow.

YANIS Open the door or I will snap the girl's neck.

DOCTOR Erimem?

ERIMEM *(Choking)* Don't give it to them.

YANIS QUIET!

ERIMEM *gurgles as she's being throttled.*

DOCTOR All right. All right. Just don't hurt her.

FAYUM Is this a trap? Tell me.

DOCTOR Suddenly I don't feel all that chatty, Fayum.

HOREMSHEP Then we will take the knowledge from your mind. If you resist, Yanis will snap Erimem's neck.

ERIMEM Doctor?

DOCTOR Quiet, Erimem. All right, Horemshep. I won't fight you. Just don't harm her.

HOREMSHEP Let us into your mind, Doctor. When you are part of us, we will spread across eternity.

FAYUM His mind is vast.

DOCTOR Thank you.

YANIS We must have his mind.

DOCTOR Actually, I'm using it at the moment.

HOREMSHEP With your knowledge we can spread across the planet. We can have all planets, all times. We can be supreme.

DOCTOR None of you are strong enough to take my mind from me.

HOREMSHEP No single one of us it is true - but for all we are many, we are one mind.

Sort of swirling sound effect.

FAYUM And we will come together to take your mind.

ERIMEM Doctor, what's happening?

More swirling, mixed with demonic screams and wails and the chattering

of thousands of voices. *FAYUM groans and collapses. YANIS yells and follows suit.*

DOCTOR All the different fragments of the parasite are leaving the other hosts - human, insect, everything - and coming together in Horemshep so that he can take my mind.

HOREMSHEP Nearly, Doctor, but I am not the host.

With a loud groan, HOREMSHEP collapses.

PERI (Voice distorted) I am.

DOCTOR Peri? No! This isn't how it's supposed to happen.

PERI You will not fight your friend. You care too much for life.

That is why you will lose.

DOCTOR Let her go.

PERI Do you threaten me? This one believes that you would have a plan of some kind.

DOCTOR So Peri's thoughts are still in there.

PERI Do you have a plan?

DOCTOR An offer. Now that you've left the minds of all the people you've affected on Earth, I can take you off the planet.⁸¹

PERI Transport? To where?

DOCTOR There are any number of uninhabited worlds...

PERI No. We need... I need new bodies so that I can grow.

DOCTOR Worlds with non-sentient life, then.

PERI How could I exist inside a blank mind? That would be worse than death.

DOCTOR Would it be any worse than you've done to people here? Taking their bodies and wiping their minds? Leave Earth. Please.

PERI No. (Almost seductive) Give yourself to us, Doctor. You can become greater than even you can imagine.

DOCTOR I'm afraid you leave me no choice.

Sound of the DOCTOR fumbling with a piece of equipment.

ERIMEM The talisman you used to block out the sun.

DOCTOR The telepathic inhibitor. When I activate this, it'll disorient the creature in Peri's mind until I deliver it to the appropriate authorities.

PERI (More like PERI) Doctor, don't. Please?

DOCTOR No, you can't trick me that easily. Goodnight.

Sound of the circuits being activated. PERI gasps and yells - but doesn't collapse.

PERI I am still here.

DOCTOR Full power.

PERI I am too strong for the machine. You cannot defeat me. You have lost, Doctor.

DOCTOR Erimem, how are Fayum and Horemshep?

ERIMEM Fayum's in a daze but Horemshep has fled.

DOCTOR This isn't working quite as I planned.

PERI You are beaten, Doctor. Accept the fact. I have the knowledge of thousands to call upon. Even you can't defeat that.

DOCTOR Can't I? Thousands, you say? I wonder... Who are you?

PERI I have no name. I am...

DOCTOR I'm not asking you. I'm asking the memories you've taken. Who are you? Peri, I know you're still in there. Who are you, Peri?

PERI Peri Brown.

DOCTOR Who else? You have the memories of thousands. Who else are you?

PERI (*Voice sounding different - a different personality*)
Ebren.

DOCTOR Who are you, Ebren? What do you do?

PERI I'm a farmer. I raise sheep. I...

DOCTOR Who else is there? Tell me who you are. All of you.

PERI I am Ebren.. I am... (*Her voice changes as different personalities are brought to the fore*) ...Shemek.

ERIMEM He was my teacher.

DOCTOR Ask him a question. Anything. Quickly.

ERIMEM Where did you give me my lessons?

PERI/SHEMEK In the gardens, of course. You liked the smell of the flowers. And you could see what was happening in the palace. You always were one for gossip and the like.

DOCTOR (*Talking over PERI/SHEMEK*) Another question, Erimem.

ERIMEM What was my favourite lesson? Do you remember?

PERI/SHEMEK Of course I do. You always wanted to hear more of the history of our people. You made me tell stories to you long after I should have gone home.

DOCTOR (*Interrupting*) Ebren, who told you stories? Did your parents tell you stories when you were a child?

PERI (*Voice switches to PERI/EBREN voice*) My father until he died, and then my mother. I told stories to my son...

DOCTOR (*Over PERI/EBREN*) Ask Shemek more questions, Erimem. As many as you can think of. As varied as you can.

ERIMEM Shemek, do you remember when I fell from a tree?

PERI/SHEMEK (*Switching voice again*) I thought you had died, little one.

DOCTOR Ebren, where do you live?

PERI/EBREN On the edge of the deserts...

ERIMEM Shemek, where do you live?

PERI/SHEMEK In the...

DOCTOR Ebren, who lives with you?

PERI/EBREN My son and...

ERIMEM What was your wife's name, Shemek?

PERI/SHEMEK Nefral, she died...

DOCTOR Peri, where do you live? Who lives there with you?

ERIMEM Who are your sons, Shemek?

DOCTOR Where did you go to school, Peri? Where did we meet? Ebren, tell me the names of your family.

PERI (*Struggling with varied personalities all at once.*) Four sons... Shintu... Lanzarotte, I was there on vacation with my...

ERIMEM What's happening to her?

DOCTOR She's trying to deal with three sets of memories at once. The human mind wasn't designed to do that. Keep asking them questions.

ERIMEM What city do you live in, Peri? Tell me about it. Tell me about the people. How do they choose their leaders?

PERI By election every...

DOCTOR Ebren, you were trying to tell me about your sons. And you, Shemek.

PERI (*Struggling between personas*) I have four sons... no, three and two daughters.

DOCTOR Which is it? Are you E布伦 or Shemek? Peri, keep talking about the elections.

PERI I have... we have votes every...

DOCTOR Your sons! How many.

ERIMEM The election, Peri.

PERI There's too much.

DOCTOR She can't cope with it. Time to finish it. Who else can hear me? How many of Yanis' mercenaries are there? How many more are you? Answer me. Who are you? Tell me. Tell me your names. All of you.

PERI (*Voice changing constantly - becoming frantic*) Amerit, Tushka, Shemek, I'm Shemek, I'm... Corfret, no, Merenhapsut, E布伦. Peri. I'm Peri. I'm Peri Brown. I'm... Silliphar, Moeshba, Fullin, I'm...

DOCTOR Who are you? Who are you?

ERIMEM Where do you come from? Where do you live?

DOCTOR What's your name? Who was your mother?

ERIMEM What did you eat last?

DOCTOR Where were you born?

ERIMEM Who do you love?

DOCTOR WHO ARE YOU?

PERI (*Losing control - too many personalities*) I'm... I am... my children... I... I can't... too many voices. Too much.⁸² I can't... Too many. Too much... TOO MUCH!

With a loud, pained yell, PERI collapses and hits the ground.

ERIMEM Is she dead?

DOCTOR Unconscious. Her mind couldn't cope with a thousand sets of memories and shut down. No, don't touch her. Keep back. At least until the inhibitor's switched on.

Sound of telepathic inhibitor being switched on.

DOCTOR There. That should...

A cat meows.

DOCTOR No! Shoo. Get away from her.

The cat spits and hisses.

DOCTOR Keep away from the cat. The entity's passed a fragment of itself into that. Come here, you little brute. Ah. Missed. I need something to catch him in.

ERIMEM My cloak.

Cloak is removed and thrown to the DOCTOR. The cat spits and hisses.

DOCTOR Got it. Come on, come on. Gently. Gently.

Cloak is thrown. The cat sounds even more agitated.

DOCTOR Got you. Calm down. I'm not going to hurt you. Just tie the inhibitor round your neck and... There. That's better, isn't it?

The cat spits and slashes the DOCTOR - it just plain doesn't like him.

DOCTOR Ow.

ERIMEM Give him to me, Doctor. You tend to Peri.

DOCTOR Be careful. He's...

The cat purrs contentedly.

ERIMEM Yes?

DOCTOR Never mind. Peri? Peri? Out cold. Good. I think we should get ou - oof

He is knocked aside

YANIS What has happened? My head is...

DOCTOR The least of your worries, Yanis. Go now.

YANIS You have done this to me. I will cut you apart and let the cats feed.

DOCTOR Yanis, we don't have time for this.

YANIS You still have an enemy here, Doctor.

FAYUM And you have one here, Yanis.⁸³

YANIS Quiet, boy. You'll die once I've dealt with these. I can still have Egypt - when your Pharaoh is dead.

FAYUM You will not harm her.

Yanis roars, draws his sword and swings it. It hits another sword.

YANIS What? You, boy? Fighting me? I should have killed you back in my camp.

FAYUM You are welcome to try again.

Swords clash.

ERIMEM Fayum is a strong fighter, Doctor, but he can't hold Yanis for long. We must finish this quickly.

DOCTOR Erimem, go. Take the cat and go. I'll bring Peri as soon as I can. Just go.

YANIS I'll catch you, girl. You won't get far.

FAYUM Further than you.

Sound of a sword being stuck into YANIS - he roars.

YANIS You? You've...

YANIS *lurches hitting a pillar. The roof cracks loudly and ominously.*

FAYUM The roof.

DOCTOR It's millennia old. There's no telling the damage he did when he stumbled against the pillar.

FAYUM I should finish him.

Another crack.

DOCTOR There's no time for that. Go. Go.

FAYUM's footsteps head along the passage. The DOCTOR hefts PERI and follows.

DOCTOR Up. Come on, Peri.

YANIS *(Gasping in pain)* Run, pigs. I'll find you. I'll track you down and slaughter y-

Major crack in the roof. YANIS yells as the roof collapses on him.

55. Giza.

ERIMEM and FAYUM are above as the DOCTOR climbs out of the sink-hole with PERI.

ERIMEM Doctor, when the ground shook I feared the worst. It even cracked the face from the great Sphinx... I am pleased you are both alive.

DOCTOR We'll be right as rain as soon as I've had the TARDIS purge the creature from Peri and your cat.⁸⁴ What about the battle?

ERIMEM The mercenaries have fled. But there has been enough death today. Let them go.

ANTRANAK Even this one, Majesty? I saw Horemshep climb out of the well. I persuaded him to stay.

ERIMEM Antranak! Oh Antranak, I feared you were dead.⁸⁵

ANTRANAK Merely a flesh wound, your majesty. It takes more than that to keep me down when I have a Pharaoh to protect.

HOREMSHEP Majesty... Pharaoh, it wasn't my doing. The demon creature made me do this.

ERIMEM Send him to Thebes in chains. Let him answer to a court.⁸⁶

FAYUM And me?

DOCTOR You were hardly responsible for your actions.⁸⁷ And you did save us from Yanis.

ERIMEM You committed no crime, Fayum.

ANTRANAK You fought Yanis? And won?

FAYUM I'm more surprised than you are, Antranak.

ANTRANAK I doubt that. I'll have to be careful when I argue with you in future.⁸⁸

ERIMEM There was no weapon below, Doctor, was there? It was just a lure to isolate the creature in one body.

DOCTOR That would be telling.

ANTRANAK What are your orders, Pharaoh?

ERIMEM Doctor?

DOCTOR Home, I think.

ERIMEM Home.

56. Thebes.

ERIMEM's palace. Much cheering and victorious yelling. A triumphant fanfare outside. The TARDIS door opens, the DOCTOR and PERI emerge.

PERI Honestly, Doctor, I'm fine. Don't fuss. You've been asking how I feel every hour on the hour since we got back to Thebes.

DOCTOR Well, you had quite an ordeal.

PERI And I'm fine now.

ERIMEM I am pleased to hear it.

DOCTOR It sounds like the people are waiting for you, Pharaoh. They're eager to celebrate your victory.

PERI Look at the size of that crowd.

ERIMEM I don't feel like celebrating a battle that cost untold lives.

PERI At least now you can be Pharaoh.

ERIMEM No. I can never be Pharaoh, can I, Doctor?

PERI Why not? Don't tell me - history. So Erimem went through all this for nothing?

DOCTOR You could stay and be Pharaoh. I won't stop you.

ERIMEM I have done my duty. Egypt is safe and Fayum will make an excellent Pharaoh - though he doesn't know it yet.

PERI But he's not really your brother!

ERIMEM So? He will still make a better Pharaoh than I.

PERI Where will you go?

ERIMEM North, to one of the islands. Or perhaps Greece. No one will know me there. I can study and learn.

DOCTOR It may not be that easy. Your face is already on coins and works of art.

PERI We could take you somewhere. Couldn't we, Doctor?

DOCTOR Absolutely not. It's out of the question.

PERI Why? You said yourself, there's nowhere civilised here she can go without being recognised.

DOCTOR Yes, but that's hardly a good enough reason for me to take her off through time and space.

ERIMEM What will I do if I stay here? Let me come with you. Please.

DOCTOR If I do, you can never come back.
ERIMEM There is nothing to keep me here now.
DOCTOR Oh, all right. You want to learn you say?
ERIMEM Yes.
DOCTOR I suppose there are a few university chancellors around the galaxy who owe me favours. I'm sure we'll find you somewhere acceptable.
PERI You'll probably wind up teaching Egyptian history.
ERIMEM It will be impossible to get through these crowds before nightfall.
DOCTOR Oh, I think we'll manage. In here.
ERIMEM You plan to carry me out in this blue box of yours?
DOCTOR Something like that. In you go.
ERIMEM Very well. Wait, I can't go without my pet.
The cat purrs. Then hisses at the DOCTOR.
DOCTOR If you must.⁸⁹
ERIMEM I... I don't believe it.
PERI Just don't believe that the Doctor can really control this thing.
DOCTOR Thank you, Peri. I'll have you know that the TARDIS and I are in perfect harmony. Most of the time.
PERI At least I got to know whose face is on the Sphinx.
DOCTOR I thought the cave-in damaged the face.
ERIMEM It did. My sculptors are busy repairing the damage. Fayum and the council thought that my face should go on the great Sphinx but I didn't want that. Instead Peri gave them very exact images of a king to work from.
PERI The King.
DOCTOR Peri, what have you done?
PERI It won't change anything. Napoleon's troops will still use the face for target practice in three thousand years' time, so nobody will know whose face it was. Besides, the Sphinx is close to Memphis – and there's only one king from Memphis.
DOCTOR Tell me you didn't.
PERI (*Very Elvis*) Uh-huh-huh.
ERIMEM Elvis is a very strange name for a king.
Doors close and his voice is cut off. The chamber doors burst open
ANTRANAK Pharaoh. We are ready to –
FAYUM (*Breathless and excited*) Pharaoh, the people are...
 Pharaoh? Pharaoh?
*The TARDIS dematerialisation noise.*⁹⁰
ANTRANAK Pharaoh? Erimem?
FAYUM She's gone, Antranak.
ANTRANAK She truly was a god, Fayum.
FAYUM Oh. Now what?

ENDS

NOTES

PART ONE

1. At the end of the scene, HOREMSHEP laughs.
2. Line changed to: 'How can the Console Room be **in** here.'
3. The sniff comes *after*, 'I'd say Earth.'
4. Line changed to: 'Though I can't say the same for **that** chap I borrowed this chariot from.'
5. Line changed to: 'She's **thinks** she'll be safe there.'
6. Line changed to: 'You are the spineless pig who let **that** whelp of a girl escape?'
7. Line changed to: 'Tell me about **that** man.'
8. Line changed to: 'What has happened **now is** that unbedded whelp who calls herself Pharaoh knows that we are here and she knows that we will attack sooner rather than later. I think I should **have** slit you open and let the dogs feed.'
9. There is an added, '**Erm**,' at the beginning of the line.
10. Line changed to: 'Just ignore **it** if it bothers you.'
11. Line changed to: 'He's **the** chief of the council of priests.'
12. Line changed to: 'You may find some of their activities **unusual** but remember, you're seeing them from a 20th century perspective.' Gary Russell: '*It's only a little change but we thought on the day, Nicola Bryant especially, that as an educated modern girl from Baltimore Peri was unlikely to actually be "offended" - it seemed too strong a reaction to a couple of pairs of breasts! Howard's educational jaunts around the globe with his stepdaughter in tow would have opened her mind somewhat, we decided.*'
13. Line changed to: 'Bring boar for my **guests**.'
14. Line changed to: 'Just push it **around** your plate.'

PART TWO

15. Line changed to: 'And be gentle with **the Doctor**.'
16. Line changed to: 'I'm not privy to the **thoughts** of killers.'
17. Line changed to: 'Then you must discover what he meant by **the true Pharaoh**.'
18. Line changed to: '**This** last year has seen great unrest and turmoil in Egypt.'
19. Line changed to: '**Now**, if you'll excuse me.'
20. Line changed to: 'He is unconscious **now**, so at least he will feel no pain.'
21. Line changed to: 'I must attend an emergency council meeting soon but I have called for a more experienced healer to **tend** him while I am gone. But there is something else that seems odd. I **would swear I could** make out the beating of two hearts in his chest.'
22. Deleted dialogue: '~~The enemy charioteer we found in the desert~~

~~still refuses to speak.~~ Also cut were the first two words of the next line. Gary Russell: 'We cut this as Kishik of course is never found by Erimem's people. He goes back to Yanis, tail between his legs! On a casting note, apart from Caroline Morris, Jonathan Owen who plays Antranak was the only actor on this story I'd not worked with before, although I was familiar with his work! He won't thank me for saying this, but as a fan of terrible BBC early-Eighties soap Triangle, I remembered his regular stint as Peter the Purser. He is a mate of Maggie Stables and it was she who recommended him to me. He is one of a number of actors we've employed who have blown us away by the fact that the voice you hear as their character – in this case obviously Antranak – bears no resemblance to their real voice. Many good actors can change their voice for a few lines but to change it and keep it constant for two days, dropping into it at a moment's notice, especially recording, as we do, woefully out of order, takes skill and concentration. I have no doubt Jonathan will crop up in something of mine again one day.'

23. Line changed to: 'All **of** those you would expect to sit in Horemshep's shadow, hoping for his approval.'

24. Deleted dialogue: '~~As you did? I would bet my life that you did.~~'

25. Line changed to: 'They will have asked **certain** questions among themselves concerning Erimem's claim.'

26. Line changed to: '**And** I'll try not to let it happen again.'

27. This switch to Scene 18 began with this line, so it is therefore distorted.

28. This line was said under the preceding one.

29. The switch to Scene 19 is here, so this line is not distorted.

30. Line changed to: 'One of the palace women was found dead a few hours ago **by her own hand.**' Gary Russell: 'We changed this because we thought it was essential straight away to suggest that Varela committed suicide, otherwise it might have been a red herring, an additional layer of intrigue into a plot already overflowing with them.'

31. Line changed to: 'My Pharaoh may be walking into danger to help you enter this **palace.**'

32. Line changed to: 'If you had done your job properly, we wouldn't have to **be going** in here.'

33. Line changed to: 'I'd bet my last buck those are the assassin's **footprints** from when he came in.'

34. Line changed to: 'Well okay, maybe that's a bad **example.**'

35. Line changed to: 'Now my only living relation is my mother but ~~now~~ she thinks I am a god and will not look me in the face.' Gary Russell: 'It's a tiny change, but the removal of the word "now" changes heaps about the culture. The fact is, Erimem's mother would have thought she was a god for quite a while, whereas the "now" made it sound as if it were as a result of last night's party, or Varela's death. It was during the recording of this scene that I lent over to writer Iain McLaughlin and commented on how good I thought Caroline was. He agreed. And at that moment I asked if we could keep the character as a companion. I suppose it had been at the back of my mind when reading the script but I'd not seriously considered it. Shortly after, I discussed it with Jason Haigh-Ellery and he'd pondered the same thing. As he'd introduced me to Caroline in the

first place, I think he was doubly pleased. We both were – I'd got a top actress and a top character and I'd made the boss happy!

36. The word '**hey**' is said twice.
37. Added dialogue – SLAVE: '**My lord.**'
38. Line changed to: '**My mum** could have a field day here.'
39. Line changed to: 'For what it's worth, you may just have invented one of the most important political **concepts** ever – **working the people.**' Gary Russell: '*We asked Nicola (or maybe she volunteered) to go and phone her hubby, Derek, an American, to find out if "walkabout" was a term he'd heard or would expect to hear in the States. "No," came the reply – and he'd suggested "working the people". I thought it sounded more like something those topless girls back in Part One's party might do, but then, I would.*'
40. Line changed to: 'When **I last** heard the Doctor's condition had not changed.'

PART THREE

41. Deleted dialogue: '**Doctor?**'
42. The cliffhanger ending to Part One was extended until the end of Scene 26 (see page 33). Gary Russell: '*This was the first Doctor Who audio that David Darlington worked on and I enjoy doing post-production with him. He lives 15 minutes away which means unlike, say Alistair Lock or Jim Mortimore or the ERS boys, it doesn't take three hours just to get to their workplaces! This change of placement for the episode ending was his idea, and a good one.*'
43. Line changed to: 'Now we shall see **their plan.**'
44. Line changed to: '**Here!** Who are you?'
45. Line changed to: 'From all **the** corners of the world.'
46. Line changed to: '**But** you should fear what you found in that stasis box through there.'
47. Line changed to: 'I shall take great pleasure in killing you **personally.**'
48. Line changed to: 'I had **rather a** long nap last night.'
49. Line changed to: 'I **can** make out three, no, four chariots following us.'
50. Line changed to: 'Best night's sleep I've had **for** centuries.'
51. Line changed to: '**No,** you're wrong.'
52. Line changed to: 'Murder Fayum and take the throne **for** yourself with the help of the mercenaries outside the city?'
53. Line changed to: '**What's** a few cuts and bruises?' Gary Russell: '*This is one of those things that needs a "well, you had to be there", but we all found the idea that Peri could swallow a few cuts and bruises hilarious. As you do. Thus we changed it to, "What's a few cuts and bruises?" I think we laugh too much at crap in studio sometimes...*'
54. Line changed to: 'The temple guards and chariots need only a few **moments.**'
55. Line changed to: 'So, this **is the** pup you plan to put on the throne?'

56. Line changed to: 'I want to be knee-deep in Egyptian blood before the hour is out – then I'll bed **that** brat Pharaoh myself.'
57. Line changed to: '~~But~~ the men do not want to leave Thebes unguarded.'
58. Deleted dialogue: '~~Doctor?~~'
59. Line changed to: 'You planned this, **Doctor.**'
60. Line changed to: 'I misjudged you, ~~Doctor.~~'

PART FOUR

61. '**Thank you,**' is added at the beginning of the line, as in Part Three's cliffhanger.
62. '**Whoa, whoa there,**' added at the beginning of the line.
63. Line changed to: 'Who are you to know ~~of~~ these things, Doctor?'
64. This line begins Scene 43 and is therefore distorted.
65. '**Yeah,**' added at the beginning of the line.
66. Line changed to: 'Well, as close as she can be in the **circumstances.**'
67. Line changed to: 'Doctor, last night, you **told me stories** of many times and places...'
68. Deleted dialogue: '~~Whoa there.~~'
69. Deleted dialogue: '~~Down you come.~~'
70. Line changed to: 'There's four hundred metres directly behind **it.**' Gary Russell: '*We decided Iain McLaughlin had an agreement with some mate that he got a fiver each time the word Sphinx was spoken in this scene. If you're reading this along with the story, you'll notice there are less spoken "Sphinx"s than there are in this script!*'
71. Line changed to: '**It's a** useless thing.'
72. Line changed to: 'It leads under **it** and branches off under the pyramids as well, come to that, but it's the Sphinx I'm interested in.'
73. Line changed to: 'Anyway, **it** was built by refugees from Atlantis, who placed all their knowledge in a chamber between **its paws** – the Hall of Records.'
74. Line changed to: 'The troops are still **very** weary after the long march.'
75. '**They must,**' added at the beginning of the line.
76. Line changed to: 'The chariots are almost too close for **their** archers now – and we still have enough to over-run them.'
77. 'Kishik!' is repeated. Gary Russell: '*Kishik was one of my contributions as script editor. Iain's scripts didn't give the charioteer Yanis yelled at in Part One a name – and I think he did feed him to the dogs. Then as Yanis had other odd guards and charioteers to yell at in the script, I opted to keep him alive a bit longer to save an endless stream of faceless guards – although I did ask Iain to supply a sufficiently Egyptian name. However, he had to go at some point, so I had him die here. Yanis was actually upset – I'm not sure whether it's because he quite liked Kishak after all or because he wanted the pleasure of feeding him to the dogs at a later stage! Daniel*'

Brennan, who played Kishik, had previously been in a Professor Bernice Summerfield play, and I promised him another part as a result of that. (I often use Benny plays as try-outs for bigger Doctor Who roles. Which, on reflection, seems a little rude to the Benny range. Sorry Benny!) Similarly, as soon as I read the script, I knew who I wanted for Yanis – the fab Harry Myers who plays Adrian Wall, father to Benny’s offspring in that series. Harry is a top bloke, top actor and all-round fun guy to have in the studio. One of a good number of regular Big Finishers employed for their talent and their ability to lighten my day just by turning up. As a director, trying to get all this crammed into a two-day recording, having people around who just make you laugh by saying “Good Morning” are worth their weight in gold!

78. Line changed to: ‘We need **more** footsoldiers.’

79. Line changed to: ‘~~It’s~~ Erimem.’

80. Line changed to: ‘The potted history of Atlantis and prayers that the people and **wisdom** of Atlantis will be remembered.’

81. Line changed to: ‘Now that you’ve left the minds of all the people you’ve affected on Earth, I can take you off **this** planet.’

82. Line changed to: ‘Too **many**.’ Gary Russell: ‘Nicola did this live, swapping between the alien and Peri where necessary. I always prefer to do this if possible rather record things separately as it keeps the flow going for everyone else. Shemek, later on, is Doctor Who Magazine journalist Mark Wyman and I can’t recall who did Ebre. I’ve an unpleasant feeling it was me... Oh, it was.’

83. Line changed to: ‘And you **still** have one here, Yanis.’

84. Added dialogue – DOCTOR: ‘**Fayum, take her arm will you?**’ Gary Russell: ‘We added a line in here about Fayum in case people thought he, like Yanis, was now a red mess under a few tons of Sphinx pillar! Jack Galagher, who I’d originally worked with on The Fearmonger, wasn’t first choice for Fayum – I had planned to ask Jack to do the character of Sabian in Primeval, and offered Fayum to Ian Hallard. Ian, however, was on tour being a luvvie, as they do, and so I swapped the parts around and Jack got to go to Egypt and Ian went to Traken! As it turned out, I think Lady Luck smiled on me as they’re both better suited to the roles they ended up with. Jack, bless him, worked and worked on his script and virtually knew it off by heart by the time he turned up in the studio. I like actors like that – you get some that just turn up, having barely skimmed the first dozen pages. Then you get ones like Jack who know the story backwards and thus have no problems with out of order recording, and know exactly what’s needed for each scene. That second type of actor tends to get re-employed more than the former!’

85. The order of this line and the preceding one was changed to:

ANTRANAK Even this one, Majesty?

ERIMEM Antranak!

ANTRANAK I saw Horemshep climb out of the well.
I persuaded him to stay.

ERIMEM Oh Antranak, I feared you were dead.

86. Added dialogue – HOREMSHEP: ‘**But, your Majesty, I... you don’t understand, I really...**’ Gary Russell: ‘I was appalled with my own script editing here – the villain of the piece doesn’t get a final line! So I asked Steve Perring to ad lib – which is red rag to a bull really! I can’t recall quite how long it went on for in the rehearsal but everyone just stopped the scene and waited patiently while

Steve went on for what seemed like an hour begging for mercy. When he finally ran out of breath Peter, Nicola and Jonathan gave him a round of applause. I'd met Steve up in Bristol when we did *Seasons of Fear* and we all got on with him instantly. A fab actor and another one of those mood-lightening types. He, Harry and Jonathan were like the Marx Brothers on this one!

87. 'Fayum,' added at the beginning of the line.

88. Line changed to: 'I'll have to be **more** careful when I argue with you in future.'

89. After this line, the scene switches to inside the TARDIS. Gary Russell: 'Again, a good decision by David Darlington here to have them move into the TARDIS aurally as no one ever says, "Let's get in the TARDIS". I've always been pleased that we have post-production guys who think about things like this and thus pull my fat out of the fire. Of course, now everyone knows I'm a charlatan as a director and script-editor! Do'h!'

90. The end of this scene was slightly restructured. In the finished play, Erimem's last line is followed by a cut to outside the TARDIS. The chamber doors then open as the TARDIS dematerialisation occurs, and the scene then continues largely as scripted. (The only change was FAYUM's first line becoming: '(Breathless and excited) Pharaoh, **Pharaoh**, the people are... Pharaoh? Pharaoh?')

EYE OF THE BEETLE

PART ONE

1. Int.

Inside his shack, an Egyptian (circa 1400 BC if we could see him) is dishing up food. We can hear him pottering with pots, bowls and testing his own cooking – a noisy slurp. His name is AMENK.

AMENK Not bad. Not bad at all.
The sound of the door being hurled open and a small boy noisily runs in. The boy is TARSHISH.

TARSHISH Father! FATHER! FATHER!

AMENK I knew you could smell food, Tarshish. Your nose is sharper than a Nile crocodile. Sit and eat. What is it? What's frightened you? What have you seen? If you have been stealing figs from Mulak again, not even Pharaoh could save your hide from my belt.
Footsteps enter.

YANIS The boy saw me.

AMENK Why...? Who are you?

YANIS Yanis. Warlord of the Scorpion tribe.

Slicing blows. AMENK dead, TARSHISH soon after.

YANIS And soon to be Pharaoh of this miserable country.

Sips the food.

YANIS Not bad.

2. Inside the Temple at Thebes.

SHEMEK, an elderly priest is observing the stars and tutting. He is joined by FAYUM, a member of the Royal Court. Fayum is much younger. They are friends but talk as if at war – baiting each other. If their tone wasn't friendly, you'd think they loathed each other.

SHEMEK This is not good. Not good at all.

FAYUM Still muttering and watching the night skies, Shemek?
How are the omens? No, don't tell me – they're bad.

SHEMEK Yes. The gods send signs in the skies that speak only of terrible things to come.

FAYUM Spare me your nonsense, Shemek. We are safe inside Pharaoh's own palace. Nothing can harm us here.

SHEMEK We shall see.

FAYUM Your ramblings may impress the concubines and hesets but I see through them and I see through you, you old charlatan. Sleep well, old friend.

FAYUM's footsteps echo into the distance.

SHEMEK *(Softly)* And I see what awaits you, my impetuous friend. The same death awaiting us all.

3. TARDIS interior.

The FIFTH DOCTOR is giving PERI the ten bob tour of his beloved ship. (This is directly after Planet Of Fire, so PERI is still pretty green at this time and space travel malarkey.)

PERI I still can't believe you can fit all this into one little blue box.

DOCTOR Oh, we've barely started the tour.

PERI Barely started? We've been at it for hours. And if my mother heard me say that to a guy I'd just met she'd have a coronary on the spot.

DOCTOR What was that?

PERI Nothing. I was just saying that we'd been wandering these corridors for hours.

DOCTOR I thought you wanted to know your way around.

PERI I do, believe me, but I lost my bearings six corridors, three floors and two hours ago.

DOCTOR It just takes a little getting used to, that's all. You'll know your way around in no time.

PERI So you really know what all these doors are?

DOCTOR Naturally. For instance, this is the small library.

He opens the door and we hear waves crashing on the shore.

PERI The books are going to get wet.

DOCTOR Ah.

He shuts the door.

DOCTOR Of course, sometimes the TARDIS moves things about. Still, not to worry. A little redecorating never hurt anybody.

PERI A little redecorating? You've got a lake in there.

DOCTOR Yes, I know. I much preferred it where it was. Where to next?

PERI I don't suppose you've got a restaurant stashed away here? My stomach thinks my throat's been cut.

DOCTOR There should be a food machine around here someplace. I haven't used it much since Susan left...

A thud as the TARDIS lands.

DOCTOR We've landed. Let's see where we are. We can carry on the tour later. Come on. This way.

He hurries off.

PERI (Mutters) Great. We'll just pick this up later, will we?

DOCTOR (Calling) Peri...

PERI Coming.

4. TARDIS Console Room.

The DOCTOR is busy working the controls when PERI hurries in.

PERI Doctor...

DOCTOR Sssh.

PERI Do...

DOCTOR Ssssh. Ah. Excellent.

PERI From that 'Ah!' and 'Excellent!' I take it I don't have to ask if you know what happened.

DOCTOR We've materialised.

PERI You're gonna have to teach me how these controls work.
DOCTOR Perhaps. I remember what happened the last time I let Tegan drive. Come on. Let's take a look outside...
PERI You male chauvinist...

5. Ext. The Egyptian desert.

PERI hurries out of the TARDIS after the DOCTOR.

PERI ...porker. Where are we?
DOCTOR From the gravity and atmosphere (*sniffs*) I'd say Earth. No industrial by-products in the air? Definitely Earth. Egypt, roughly 1400BC.

PERI Oh, come on. Even you can't tell all that from the air.
DOCTOR True, but the hieroglyphs on the wall of that house behind the TARDIS are a bit of a giveaway.

PERI Great. Even the Egyptians had graffiti.
DOCTOR Hmm. (*Thoughtful*) Can you hear something?

PERI Like what?
DOCTOR Horses... Like...

A young woman (late teens) is yelling and shouting for her horses to stop. Her chariot is a runaway. She is HATCHEPSUT.

HATCHEPSUT Slow down. Whoa. Slow down, damn you.

DOCTOR Like that.
PERI Her chariot's out of control.

DOCTOR She's being chased. There's another chariot.
All through we hear HATCHEPSUT and her horses getting closer.

PERI They're firing arrows at her. We have to do something.
DOCTOR I'm thinking.

PERI Think faster. They're almost on top of us.
DOCTOR Here. Grab that rope. Tie this end round the TARDIS.

PERI What are you going to do?
DOCTOR Take the other end to the far side of the breach in the wall and yank it tight after the first chariot is through. Hurry.

PERI I wish I had paid more attention at summer camp. This stuff's so slippery.

HATCHEPSUT Steady. Steady.
DOCTOR Over here. This way. Peri, are you ready?

PERI Nearly.
DOCTOR Hurry. She's almost through. Quickly.

The pounding of the horses is almost on top of them.
PERI There. Done. She's through. Pull it.
The sound of the rope going taught and then a shocked yell, followed by the sound of a man in armour hitting the ground hard.

PERI You got him.
The fallen man groans. HATCHEPSUT is yelling for her horses to stop.

HATCHEPSUT Stop. Slow now. Stop. Whoa.

No use. The horses thunder on.
DOCTOR Her horses have been scared out of their wits. She can't control them. Keep an eye on our friend there.

PERI What?
DOCTOR I don't have time to argue. Someone has to stop those horses. Tell your friend I borrowed his chariot for a few minutes.

The sound of the reins being flicked and the chariot moving off again.

DOCTOR Hya.

The fallen man groans and mumbles.

MAN Wha...?

PERI I hope this isn't an antique.

The sound of a pottery jar being smashed over the man's head. Another groan and he hits the dirt hard for the second time in under a minute.

PERI Sorry. That's really gonna hurt.

Out in the desert, the DOCTOR's chariot is chasing HATCHEPSUT's. If we could see them the horses would be sweating up a foam as they charge across the desert. Their hooves are pounding loudly.

DOCTOR Hya. HYA!

HATCHEPSUT WHOA. SLOW DOWN. STOP!

DOCTOR I'm almost there. Hang on.

HATCHEPSUT Whoa. Slow now.

DOCTOR Here. I'm bringing my chariot alongside. You'll have to step across onto it.

HATCHEPSUT No.

DOCTOR Your horses are too frightened to stop. I'm not going to hurt you. I'm almost there. Just a little closer.

On top of the horses pounding hooves, the sound of wheels touching and sparks flying. Both HATCHEPSUT and the DOCTOR yelp.

DOCTOR A little too close. Gently. Gently. Now. Step across. Hurry, I can't hold the chariots this close for long. Take my hand. Take it! Now jump. It's just one step. Step now.

The sound of HATCHEPSUT leaping over and landing on the DOCTOR's chariot.

DOCTOR Got you. It's all right. I've got you. Whoa now. Whoa.

The chariot pulls to a stop.

DOCTOR Are you hurt?

HATCHEPSUT Stay away from me.

DOCTOR It's all right. Put the knife away. I'm not going to hurt you.

Though I can't say the same for the chap I borrowed this chariot from.

HATCHEPSUT Where is he?

DOCTOR Back there. Unconscious.

HATCHEPSUT Good. Get me away from here.

DOCTOR I don't suppose you'd care to tell me why he was trying to kill you?

HATCHEPSUT You don't know?

DOCTOR If I knew I wouldn't ask, would I?

HATCHEPSUT You are a stranger here. Or an idiot.

DOCTOR Of the two, I'd rather be a stranger. I've been to Egypt before but I don't think I've been here recently...

HATCHEPSUT Take me to Thebes.

DOCTOR You haven't answered my question.

HATCHEPSUT No, I haven't. When we are safe in Thebes, I will see that your questions are answered.

DOCTOR All right. Hold on. Hup. Giddup.

The horses pull the chariot away.

6. The desert.

In the desert, by the TARDIS, the DOCTOR's chariot pulls up by PERI.

DOCTOR Whoa.

PERI Doctor, am I glad you're back! I'm almost out of pots to clobber this guy with.
The man groans. Another pot smashes and he hits the ground hard again.

PERI But I've still got one left.

DOCTOR You enjoyed that too much, young lady.

HATCHEPSUT I hoped he would be dead.
The sound of HATCHEPSUT giving her would-be killer a real good booting - well, sandaling.

DOCTOR Stop. There's no need for that. Beating up an unconscious man won't solve anything.

HATCHEPSUT I owe him and his kind a hundred times worse.
Knife pulled again.

DOCTOR Give me that knife.

HATCHEPSUT Let go of me. Give it back. Why do you protect this filth? Are you one of their number? Are you a mercenary?

DOCTOR A doctor. The Doctor, actually. And I'm protecting him because I despise meaningless death.

HATCHEPSUT (*Conceding unhappily*) Get me back to Thebes. Now.

PERI You got her, then.

DOCTOR So it would seem.

PERI So who is she? Why were they trying to kill her? I thought this guy might have been a bandit but that's battle armour he's wearing.

DOCTOR Yes, I spotted that as well. She's not exactly the most communicative of people. We'll take her to Thebes. Rip Van Winkle with the headache as well.

PERI Four of us on that chariot is gonna be cramped.

DOCTOR We'll be all right. These war chariots were built for two passengers and I don't think Sleeping Beauty will mind if we hang him over one of the horses.

HATCHEPSUT We must leave now. By now he is bound to have been missed.

DOCTOR That might be a good idea. I've had more than enough excitement for one day.

HATCHEPSUT Hurry. Or I will leave you both here.

PERI That's gratitude for you.

7. The desert.

Two more of the would-be assassins are observing. These are scouts.

SCOUT 1 The stranger has rescued her.

SCOUT 2 Do we attack them now?

SCOUT 1 With what? We have no arrows left. Besides, the chariot would reach the outer defences of Thebes before we could catch it. We would be tortured for answers like they will torture that poor fool.

SCOUT 2 So what do we do?

SCOUT 1 Report that she escaped. And hope that our chief spares our lives.

8. Thebes.

The chariot rattles and chunters towards Thebes.

DOCTOR There it is.

PERI Wow.

DOCTOR Yes, it is impressive, isn't it?

PERI If Howard could see me now. He always moaned that I didn't have any interest in history.

DOCTOR Where to?

HATCHEPSUT The palace.

DOCTOR The palace? If this is an enemy chariot, I don't think they'll exactly welcome us with open arms.

HATCHEPSUT That will not be a problem, Doctor.

PERI Doctor... have you noticed the people...

DOCTOR ...are all kneeling?

PERI And bowing.

DOCTOR Excuse me. I don't think you told us exactly who you are.

HATCHEPSUT No. I did not. Stand proud and firm.

PERI We've got company.

DOCTOR Whoa there. Whoa.

The chariot halts. More chariots rattle to join them.

PERI I don't like the look of those swords, Doctor.

DOCTOR I'm not too keen on the spears either. Best behaviour, Peri.

PERI You patronising...

A man's voice cuts across her. He sounds mid-forties – ANTRANAK, head of the palace armies. A younger man is with him – SENENMUT.

ANTRANAK Mighty one. We sing praises to the gods for your safe return.

SENENMUT I warned you against that ride in the desert, Hatchepsut.

DOCTOR Hatchepsut?

PERI Mighty one?

HATCHEPSUT Remember who you are speaking to, Senenmut. Be very careful. Escort us to the palace, Antranak. We have a great deal to do but this is not the place to do it.

ANTRANAK As you command, mighty Pharaoh.

PERI Pharaoh? Oh, God.

DOCTOR I should have known. Why else would they be attacking her?

PERI Should I be bowing or curtsying or something?

HATCHEPSUT Yes, but refrain from doing so. The chariot is quite small – and it would be unseemly for someone accompanying Pharaoh to fall off in public.

PERI Whatever you say.

HATCHEPSUT I would wager, Doctor, that you did not expect anything like this when you first saw my chariot being chased.

DOCTOR Er, not really, no.

HATCHEPSUT And yet you saved me without knowing who I was. Would you have done anything differently if you had known I was to be Pharaoh. I don't think so. Am I right?

DOCTOR I was under the impression that divine Pharaoh is always right.

HATCHEPSUT I think I would do well to avoid sparring in word games

with you, Doctor. You have no fear of me yet you don't seek my favour either. You are a most unusual man.

DOCTOR Thank you.

HATCHEPSUT Now smile and wave to my people. Let them see that their divine Pharaoh is unharmed.

9. The desert.

The two scouts who watched the DOCTOR rescue HATCHEPSUT are back at their camp. Waiting for them is YANIS.

YANIS Where are the two spineless dogs who let the whelp of a girl escape? Bring them in here.

Sound of the two SCOUTS being hurled into the tent. When they speak they are terrified and babble, often talking over each other and continuing the others sentences.

GUARD Here, sire.

YANIS Well, dogs? Do you have an explanation of how the Egyptian pup escaped from a squad of over a dozen chariots? Make your answer good or I will stake you in the sand and watch the buzzards feast on your eyes and innards.

SCOUT 1 It wasn't our fault, sire.

SCOUT 2 We plead for mercy.

YANIS Save your pleading. I want answers. How did she escape?

SCOUT 2 She had a large escort. Six...

SCOUT 1 No, ten chariots. We killed all the rest - we even got her driver.

YANIS And still she escaped? Imbeciles! Worse - cowards.

SCOUT 2 No, great sire. She had help.

YANIS What help?

SCOUT 1 A man with long fair hair and strange clothing...

SCOUT 2 And a violent girl who repeatedly attacked one of our men even when he was unconscious.

YANIS A girl should be no match for a man - not even one of you idiots. Tell me about the man.

SCOUT 2 He knocked our warrior from his chariot as if by magic.

SCOUT 1 Pharaoh's horses were running wild but this fair haired man took our fallen comrade's chariot and caught up.

YANIS Even though the Pharaoh girl's horses were charging out of control?

SCOUT 2 He drove like a demon. I have never seen better. Except for you, of course, mighty Yanis.

SCOUT 1 He even lifted the Pharaoh from her chariot with one hand.

YANIS Strong, is he?

SCOUT 1 Yes. The strength of ten men,

SCOUT 2 And tall. A head taller than most.

YANIS So you were afraid of this mighty, fair giant? That is why you didn't attack.

SCOUT 2 No, great chief. They were too far away. We could never have caught them before they reached Thebes.

SCOUT 1 We thought it best to return and tell you what had happened.

YANIS What has happened is that now that inbred whelp who calls herself Pharaoh knows that we are here and she knows that we will attack sooner rather than later. She is wily as a fox. She will be preparing for us. Get out. All of you.

GUARD Yes, great chief. What of these two?

YANIS Slit them open and let the dogs feed. They are worse than useless.

SCOUT 1 No, great Yanis. Mercy, please.

SCOUT 2 I have a wife and four children at home. Let me live. I will not fail you again.

SCOUT 1 And I am loyal. I have always been loyal to you.

YANIS And to my predecessor who, as I remember, you helped me murder. Guard, leave them here. I will let them live – but at a price.

SCOUT 1 Anything.

SCOUT 2 Yes, but please. Please let us live.

YANIS Guard, go.

Sound of tent flap rustling as the Guard leaves.

YANIS So you want to live?

SCOUT 2 Yes, sire.

SCOUT 1 We'll do anything...

YANIS One of you will live.

Sword drawn. Thrown into the ground.

YANIS Fight – to the death. I will let the winner live.

SCOUT 1 Fight each other?

YANIS Or will I have you both sliced open?

SCOUT 2 I... we...

Sound of the two men suddenly leaping for the sword – a fight. Yanis hugely enjoys the spectacle.

YANIS If you provide some entertainment you might prove to be of some use.

Fight continues.

10. The Palace at Thebes.

The DOCTOR is calling for PERI.

DOCTOR Are you ready yet?

PERI I'll be out in a minute.

DOCTOR Do try to hurry. It's considered bad form to keep the ruler of the known world waiting in her own palace.

PERI Okay, okay. Here I come, ready or not. Well? What do you think?

DOCTOR You've been busy.

PERI Not me. I've had half a dozen servants helping me bath – and that was only hugely embarrassing – dress, put this stuff on my eyes...

DOCTOR Kohl. It's used to make the sloe-eyes shape.

PERI I know. My stepfather is an archaeologist, remember? This dress shows a bit more... you know... than I'd like, but hey. When in Egypt. I see you've made absolutely no effort to blend in.

DOCTOR I don't know what you mean. This jacket is a classic.

PERI At least you didn't have servants trying to shave your head.

DOCTOR It's the fashion. Shall we?

11. The Palace at Thebes.

There are the rumblings of a large gathering.

PERI Now this is what I call a party. Is this all for us?

DOCTOR Shush. I think we're on.

Music is played - a fanfare.

SENE NMUT (*Grandly*) The great and mighty queen, daughter of the stars. All bow to Pharaoh Hatchepsut, divine and eternal, the living god.

DOCTOR (*Quietly*) Peri, kneel.

PERI I'd like to see you kneel in a dress this tight - actually, no I wouldn't.

SENE NMUT Rise and approach Pharaoh, Doctor.

Slight delay while the DOCTOR and PERI approach the throne.

HATCHEPSUT The Doctor and Peri have done great service to your Pharaoh and to Egypt. As thanks, Doctor, I give you this cartouche bearing my divine name. It marks you as friend of Pharaoh and under my divine protection.

DOCTOR You do me great honour, mighty Pharaoh.

HATCHEPSUT Now let the banquet begin.

A walloping great gong.

HATCHEPSUT You will sit by Pharaoh, Doctor.

DOCTOR Thank you.

PERI Yeah. Me, too.

HATCHEPSUT If you wish. Eat. You could do putting some flesh to your bones. Men do prefer something more substantial, wouldn't you say, Doctor?

DOCTOR I... never comment on a lady's appearance. I find it much safer that way.

PERI Thanks a lot.

HATCHEPSUT You amuse me, Doctor. A warrior with a wit? I have not known such a man since my husband.

PERI You're married?

HATCHEPSUT (*Very icy*) Not any more.

DOCTOR (*Quickly*) Please forgive Peri's ignorance, Majesty. We have been travelling for a considerable time. She had not heard of your divine husband's passing.

HATCHEPSUT I will forgive her lapse this time, Doctor, because you ask it.

DOCTOR You are most generous, Majesty.

Shemek, the old astronomer and priest, speaks to Fayum, renewing their banter. Senenmut is there as well.

SHEMEK This cannot sit well with you, Fayum. An outsider sitting at Pharaoh's right hand.

FAYUM I imagine it sits less well with Senenmut.

SHEMEK He's a smart lad, that Senenmut, but he should learn to be a bit more subtle when it comes to women. It doesn't do to let them see you're too keen. Especially when she's Pharaoh and she's got the temper of a trapped scorpion.

FAYUM And when she's so interested in this newcomer.

SHEMEK You spotted that as well?

FAYUM I'm young, not blind. I think everybody with eyes in the court has noticed it.

SHEMEK He's certainly an odd-looking sort. That fair hair – and that pale skin. Must come from far to the north. And stop staring at his woman, Fayum.

FAYUM She's very beautiful.

SENE NMUT She is indeed.

Yelps from Fayum and Shemek.

SHEMEK Senenmut! Must you creep around like that? I forget – you're a politician. Of course you have to creep. How long have you been skulking there?

SENE NMUT Long enough to hear you talk about me in ways I'd rather you didn't. At least in as public a place as this.

FAYUM Oh.

SHEMEK Don't deprive me of my gossip. At my age, it's one of the few pleasures I can still manage.

SENE NMUT You may fool other people with that decrepit-old-man act, Shemek, but this is me you're talking to. You don't fool me.

SHEMEK And you won't fool anyone either if you don't stop glaring at the Doctor.

FAYUM You don't like Pharaoh showing favour to this outsider.

SENE NMUT Pharaoh makes her own decisions.

And you do not like them?

SENE NMUT (*Seething*) To say that would be to admit treason. Everyone knows that divine Pharaoh is infallible. She is a living god, and as she so often points out, I am not even royal.

SHEMEK (*Laughing*) And I thought you a better liar than that.

SENE NMUT Go back to your stars, old man. Or are even they tired of your prattle? The truth is that I am worried – for Hatchepsut – and for all of us. These are strange days.

Back at the top table, PERI is obviously having a bit of a look round.

PERI I wish I'd brought a camera to this shindig.

DOCTOR And how would you explain it to the developer?

PERI Never been to a toga party?

DOCTOR Well, there was that bash Nero threw...

Music starts up. Obviously music for the dancing girls.

PERI What now?

DOCTOR The entertainment.

PERI Dancers? Oh my gosh. They're topless.

DOCTOR Well, yes they are I suppose. It's the custom. Just ignore it if it bothers you.

PERI Easy for you to say. You're not being leached at by that black toothed priest over there. If he asks me to dance I'll punch him.

DOCTOR You'll do no such thing.

PERI I'm joking. Just joking. Those other topless girls – are they the next dancers?

DOCTOR Ah... well, no. Actually, they're a different kind of entertainment.

PERI Singers? (*Dawn of realisation*) You don't mean... hookers? These people need a cold shower.

DOCTOR You may find some of their activities offensive but remember, you're seeing them from a 20th century perspective. By this time's standards, being a palace servant, even in this capacity is quite respectable.

HATCHEPSUT Are you enjoying the banquet, Doctor?
DOCTOR Very much, your majesty. Aren't we, Peri?
PERI Having a great time.
HATCHEPSUT Do any of the hesets find favour in your eye, Doctor?
DOCTOR (*Uncomfortable*) They're charming. I suppose. But I don't think I should... you know...
HATCHEPSUT You do not wish to insult Peri in public. Perhaps later.
DOCTOR Er, yes. Perhaps. (*Changing the subject*) The food is splendid.
HATCHEPSUT You must try the roast boar. It is absolutely excellent.
DOCTOR Why not?
HATCHEPSUT (*Claps hands to slave*) Bring boar for my guest.
PERI Is now a good time to remind you that I'm a vegetarian?
DOCTOR Doctor, that slave with the boar...
DOCTOR What about him? Wait, I see what you mean. His clothes don't quite match the others.
Sound of a heavy plate being thrown aside.
PERI He's got a knife!
SLAVE Death to Hatchepsut!
DOCTOR No!
SEENMUT Guards!
PERI Doctor!
There are yells and general noises of confusion and struggle, including a cry of pain from the DOCTOR.
HATCHEPSUT You have saved me again, Doctor. Senenmut, Antranak! The guards are worthless! Send them to the House of Pain.
PERI You're bleeding.
DOCTOR (*Obviously in a bit of pain*) It's nothing much. Just a flesh wound, really. The knife only grazed my hand.
The slave laughs.
HATCHEPSUT Tell me what is so funny. It will be the last thing you say before your tongue is ripped from your head.
SLAVE I will not die alone. The dagger was coated with poison. He has only minutes to live.

[*End of Part One.*]

Eye of the Beetle

PART TWO

1. Recap from Part One.

At the banquet. Sounds of general banqueting.

HATCHEPSUT (*Claps hands to slave*) Bring boar for my guest.

PERI Is now a good time to remind you that I'm a vegetarian?
Doctor, that slave with the boar...

DOCTOR What about him? Wait, I see what you mean. His clothes don't quite match the others.

Sound of a heavy plate being thrown aside.

PERI He's got a knife!

SLAVE Death to Hatchepsut!

DOCTOR No!

SENNEMMUT Guards!

PERI Doctor!

There are yells and general noises of confusion and struggle, including a cry of pain from the Doctor.

HATCHEPSUT You have saved me again, Doctor. Sennemmut, Antranak! The guards are worthless! Send them to the House of Pain.

PERI You're bleeding.

DOCTOR (*Obviously in a bit of pain*) It's nothing much. Just a flesh wound, really. The knife only grazed my hand.

The slave laughs.

HATCHEPSUT Tell me what is so funny. It will be the last thing you say before your tongue is ripped from your head.

SLAVE I will not die alone. The dagger was coated with poison. He has only minutes to live.

PERI Doctor!

DOCTOR Actually, I am feeling a little queasy, Peri.

HATCHEPSUT Take him to my private chambers. And be gentle with him.

DOCTOR Wait. What kind of poison was it?

HATCHEPSUT Tell him.

No answer. A hefty thump.

SENNEMMUT Answer Pharaoh.

DOCTOR Never mind. Give me his knife.

SENNEMMUT Here.

The Doctor sniffs.

DOCTOR Scorpion venom? Let's have a taste.

Sound of Doctor running finger along the blade and licking the venom.

DOCTOR Definitely scorpion.

PERI What are you doing? That's poison.

DOCTOR Yes, I know. Fresh, too.

SLAVE How can you take that poison and still stand?

DOCTOR Well, it would be bad manners to keel over at Pharaoh's feet.

SENMENMUT This pig will not speak here, Majesty.

HATCHEPSUT Torture this creature. I want to know why he tried to kill me and who sent him. Find out who dares attack Pharaoh.

DOCTOR Is that really necessary? No one's actually been hurt.

HATCHEPSUT He attacked me, Doctor. You may have saved my life twice but that does not give you leave to talk to me in that manner. Senenmut, I told you to torture this animal. Find out what it knows.

SLAVE You will learn nothing from me.

HATCHEPSUT We shall see. Begin with castration.

SLAVE Before coming into the palace I took a smaller dose of the same poison that was on the knife. It is more than enough to kill me. Already I feel this world slipping away from me but I have no regrets.

HATCHEPSUT Who sent you?
A slap.

HATCHEPSUT Answer me! Answer!
Another slap.

SLAVE (*Fading*) The true Pharaoh.
Sound of the slave hitting the floor, followed by the buzz of whispered conversation. The comment about the true Pharaoh has got a reaction from the cheap seats at the banquet.

SENMENMUT What should we do, Pharaoh?
No answer.

ANTRANAK Pharaoh?
There's an air of anticipation.

SHEMEK (*Quietly, to himself*) Pharaoh...

DOCTOR Hatchepsut, you must give an answer.

HATCHEPSUT (*Confident - raging but confident*) Discover what you can about this scum then throw the corpse into the Nile. And interrogate the chariot driver I captured today. Or must I do that part of your job as well? Then let the crocodiles have him. I will be in my chambers. You will accompany me, Doctor.

SENMENMUT Take this dead scum to be examined.

FAYUM Senenmut. What did the killer mean when he said 'the true Pharaoh'?

SENMENMUT How should I know?

FAYUM It will be the gossip of Thebes within the hour.

SENMENMUT I don't doubt it.

FAYUM Then you must discover what he meant by true Pharaoh.

SENMENMUT I don't need a junior priest telling me what I have to do. I don't like this. Mercenaries in the red desert, an assassin in the palace - and all when this Doctor arrives.

FAYUM How could he eat poison as if it was a sweet-meat?

SENMENMUT I don't know. But I'll find out.

2. Hatchepsut's Chambers.

PERI and HATCHEPSUT have arrived. A PHYSICIAN is tending the Doctor.

HATCHEPSUT Doctor? Doctor, are you ill?

DOCTOR Just the poison in my system.

PERI But you're going to be all right. Right?

DOCTOR It's giving me terrible heartburn. I'll be right as rain after an hour or two's sleep.

HATCHEPSUT You. Slave. Assist the Doctor to my bed.
DOCTOR There's no need.
HATCHEPSUT You said yourself that you need rest. Lie down.
DOCTOR All right.
Sound of the Doctor being lugged across and put on the bed.
HATCHEPSUT Do you need anything?
DOCTOR Something to drink wouldn't go amiss. My throat is a little dry.
HATCHEPSUT I will have wine brought.
Footsteps head away.
PERI I don't suppose you'd tell me how you managed that trick with the poison?
DOCTOR That? Oh, my physiognomy is a little different from yours. The poison's not lethal to me – it's just given me a terrible tummy ache. (*Sounding tired*) I'll be fine when I wake up. Absolutely... fine...
PERI Doctor? Doctor?
No answer.
PERI (*Disgusted*) Zonked.
HATCHEPSUT Ah, he is asleep.
PERI Yep. He'll probably be snoring his head off any minute now.
HATCHEPSUT He is a brave man.
PERI Can't deny that. Sometimes I wish he'd think before he acts.
HATCHEPSUT The brave do not have time to sit and think. They must act to seize opportunities when they come.
PERI It's acting without thinking that's left him needing to sleep off the poison. Not that I'm complaining that he stopped the assassin. I just don't want him getting hurt, that's all.
HATCHEPSUT Your care for him does you proud. Even though you are some years younger than him, I imagine he is a fine husband to you.
PERI Husband? Oh, no. We're not married.
HATCHEPSUT What then? (*Peering down her regal nose*) Are you a slave? Or a concubine?
PERI I'm nobody's slave. Or concubine for that matter.
HATCHEPSUT What then?
PERI We're friends. We travel together because we want to. Simple as that.
HATCHEPSUT Even though you are not his woman?
PERI I don't think travelling alone appeals to him much. And I get to see the world. And anywhere else for that matter.
HATCHEPSUT You make no sense.
PERI A lot of people say that.
HATCHEPSUT You share a great affection with the Doctor, though.
PERI He can be a pain sometimes but it's hard to stay mad at him for long.
Knock at door.
HATCHEPSUT Enter.
Door opens and footsteps come in.
SENMENMUT Pharaoh. I am honoured to be...
HATCHEPSUT (*Cutting across*) From that grovelling start I assume you haven't discovered anything.

SEENENMUT Not as much as I would have hoped.

PERI Have you found anything? Like, how did he get in for a start?

SEENENMUT That we do know. At least in part. One of the hesets saw him coming from the Palace of Concubines. She thought he was one of the eunuchs.

HATCHEPSUT If he had lived, I would have personally turned him into one before he was executed.

PERI Have you asked at the... what's it called?

HATCHEPSUT Palace of Concubines.

PERI Yeah. There.

SEENENMUT That is not permitted. Other than concubines and eunuchs, only Pharaoh may enter the Palace of Concubines.

PERI So you're not going to question them?

SEENENMUT That would be an unacceptable breach of our laws.

HATCHEPSUT And if I say it is allowed?

SEENENMUT Pharaoh's word is law.

HATCHEPSUT You may enter the Palace of Concubines on this occasion, Senenmut. Peri, you will accompany him.

PERI Me?

HATCHEPSUT The Doctor is your friend. Don't you want to know how this happened?

PERI I guess.

HATCHEPSUT And I think you will be less likely to be cowed by the concubines. They have lofty opinions of themselves.

PERI Okay. The Doctor will be okay here?

HATCHEPSUT I will see that he is tended to.

SEENENMUT With your leave, Majesty.

HATCHEPSUT You may go.

SEENENMUT My queen. Come.

PERI I'm not a pet dog. What next? Sit? I won't be long, Doctor.

HATCHEPSUT He can't hear you.

PERI I wanted to say it anyway.

Footsteps go. Door closes.

HATCHEPSUT You. Slave. Have Antranak join me at once. Perhaps Peri will be spending more time with the concubines than she expects.

[End of draft.]

THE EYE OF THE SCORPION: SCRIPTING NOTES

By Iain McLaughlin

E-mail: Iain McLaughlin to Gary Russell – Friday 8 December 2000
More>>>

Okay, I've just read through your notes a couple of times. For the most part I agree with your points. Some of the dialogue is ghastly and cumbersome – getting the point over but without any subtlety. I don't remember them being so duff when I wrote the thing, but in hindsight, some of the dialogue is a bit, well, crap (and I'm probably being kind to myself there). That can be fixed.

If you think the Doctor's dialogue has strayed from Peter Davison to Colin Baker, then that's a bad mistake I'll need to fix. I thought the Fifth Doctor was gutsier in Peter Davison's last year (admittedly in *The Caves of Androzani* it was because he knew he was going to peg out), but all through that year I thought he was a stronger, firmer character and I tried to push him that way. But if I've cocked it up, it needs to be fixed.

Peri's dialogue can be fixed as well. Less cocky, more intelligent? Less cheap gags? Stronger and pushing the action more. How about if she pushes for the investigation of the Palace of Concubines, and cajoles Erimem into joining her? With a bit of tweaking, the scenes in the tunnels and Palace of Concubines could change emphasis so that Peri is more of the driving force. When she gets taken as a hostage in Part Three, instead of having Peri turfed off the chariot, if she broke free and jumped she'd be freeing herself without need for rescue.

You mentioned that you wanted a less linear plot and some kind of interaction between Peri and Antranak. Rather than have him develop a crush on her, how about if he's wary of both Peri and the Doctor? He's been Erimem's adviser thus far, and now she's got new favourites. He's not jealous of Erimem (who's 17, by the way) showing them favour, but they arrived just at the right time – and that's a bit lucky for his liking. He doesn't know anything about these people, which makes him uncomfortable. So he could be wary of Peri, try to get some answers from her about who she is, where she and the Doctor came from, etc. It would all be to protect Erimem but it would give a bit of edge to him from the listener's point of view – he's got a problem with Peri, so maybe he's a bit iffy. This would give Peri the chance to stand up to Antranak when he's niggling at her. I'd also like to add a scene where the Charioteer (the Scout) is being interrogated (tortured). Peri thinks it's barbaric (inwardly, Erimem probably agrees) but Antranak thinks Peri's objections to torture are a bit shady. Why doesn't she want this enemy to be forced to tell what he knows? And when the Scout escapes, he suspects Peri even more. (Obviously it's the Horus character who lets the Scout go.) If Antranak's character is that wee bit greyer and edgier, when he's accused of the killings, for a second, we might think, yeah, it's possible he did it to protect Erimem. The extra plot-line should make scene changes easier, particularly in Parts Two and Three.

As for Horus, the chief priests of each god's temple took the name of that god and were usually addressed by the god's name. However, I take your point about Horus being associated with Sutekh and the Osirians in *Doctor Who*. The priests still retained their own names (even if they rarely used them) so there's no hassle with calling the character by his own name (how does Horemshp sound?) - all that would need would be an early mention of him being the High Priest of Horus, and leader of the Council of Priests. (I did think about calling him Anubis, but again, that's a god's name, which might make folk think of the Osirians, and besides, everyone associates Anubis with death, so it'll be a bit of a giveaway that he's the bad guy.) Early on, there should probably be a scene showing the enmity between Horemshp (?) and both Antranak and Fayum. (Maybe before the banquet?) This would build up both Antranak and Horemshp (and make them both greyer, rather than obviously good guys or bad guys) and it would help to establish who they are within the Palace hierarchy. Fayum would be quite low down the pecking order - but obviously basically a nice bloke who's known Erimem all her life, which would give his turn to villainy later on a bit more oomph.

Apart from ropy dialogue, the two main problems you mention are the ending and the idea of the Doctor using a component from the TARDIS's telepathic circuits. I didn't explain it all that well in the script, but the Doctor sensed the telepathic presence while unconscious and realised that the component would be needed. I got the impression from your notes that you weren't convinced by this bit at all. However, if we bin the idea of him nabbing a bit of the TARDIS *en route*, maybe he could use part of the stasis box for a similar purpose. The box must have had some kind of telepathic inhibitors to keep the creature dormant. Would using that disorient Yanis and his crew long enough for an escape? And he could tinker with it so that it would amplify his own thoughts out to the TARDIS (blocking the sun, etc.). From memory, I recall a few of the Virgin novels mentioning the link between the Doctor's mind and the TARDIS's telepathic circuits.

The mind creature will be explained in more depth early in Part Four, when the Doctor and Erimem are on the chariot. There's already a small scene where the Doctor briefly goes over what the creature is. He'll now go into detail, explaining that the creature exists totally in the minds of biological hosts. No matter how many people (or creatures) are infected, it remains a single creature, spreading out and looking for new hosts. It isn't particularly vicious - evolution has just left it with this as its way of propagating and surviving. If needs be, to protect itself, the creature can abandon minds. (But should this be mentioned? It's a great big sign-post of things to come. Personally I'd rather not use it - or at least make sure it's a throwaway and not handed much significance in the speech.)

The ending is the big problem. You hate it. Which is a pretty major problem really. You were clear that it's the violence in it you didn't like. Too much solving of problems just by somebody getting a thumping. Okay. Reading through it, I had a few problems with it myself - the Doctor wouldn't look to bury someone alive as easily as he did here. He'd try something smarter than that. So here's an alternative ending:

The storyline goes along the same path until the Doctor and Peri head down into the tunnel under the Sphinx. Up top, the battle is being lost by the Egyptian troops. They are being converted in mass numbers. Erimem is grabbed and dragged down, after Antranak's chariot crashes. The Doctor and Peri have reached the end of the tunnel, which he opens only to save Erimem's life. He plays the scene as if he's only just discovered that Peri is infected. If he let on that he knew days earlier, they'd know he

was up to something. Erimem will be killed (or infected) if he resists Horemshep passing the creature on to him. He agrees, but the fragment of the creature present in Horemshep can't get a grasp on his mind - it's too big. It's the Doctor's plan - he's trying to pull all the different strands of the creature into one place so that he only has one enemy to deal with. To do that he has to let the thing get an idea of how much effort it would take to capture a Time Lord's mind. When the creature comes together in one body - Peri's - the Doctor's plan is starting to go a bit pear-shaped. He'd expected it to be Horus or Yanis, where it has a stronger hold. But the creature knows the Doctor won't kill his friend - or anybody else if he can help it. He has to act quickly - the human brain can't deal with the sort of mental energy Peri's having to process. His plan was to lure the mind creature here and then use the telepathic inhibitor to disorient the host. Unfortunately, the inhibitor can't handle the sheer volume of mental energy present in Peri and burns itself out. The Doctor knows he has to get the creature in Peri talking before it can take his mind. He asks it questions - lots of questions. He gets Erimem to do the same. Everyone present throws questions at the Peri host. The strain of trying to process so many questions throws the creature into distress. At first Peri can answer the questions, throwing the answers back with arrogance and disdain, but as the questions come quicker, she is in pain and the creature finds itself struggling with the limitations of the human brain. It has the memories of so many people that it can't help knowing the answers - but the human brain can't deal with all that information at once and Peri's brain shuts down after a barrage of questions. And so everything's sorted - until a rat scuttles over and sniffs at Peri. A fragment of the creature is passed to the rat. The Doctor plonks a (canopic?) jar over the rat, trapping it. The Doctor has to get Peri and the rat to the TARDIS quickly - he can draw the mind parasite from them and store it safely until he can deliver it to the appropriate authorities. The creature makes a final bid for freedom - trying to take control of the TARDIS through the telepathic circuits, but screams in pain when it realises how vast the ship's mind (for want of a better word) is. It's out of its depth. The Doctor comments that the TARDIS will lock it away safely in a corner of her memory until it's ready to go to the authorities. (Is this TARDIS scene overkill? A cop-out? It's just that, given the Doctor's hatred for taking any life, he'd probably try to keep the creature safe, no matter what instinct had made it do. But I'm not sure if the scene in the TARDIS would be necessary. Maybe it would, just to show Peri recovering and letting Erimem see a glimpse of the reality behind the Doctor's stories. Or perhaps the Doctor could comment on the creature trying to take the ship, knowing that it doesn't have a hope? He's not even slightly worried.)

From here, Peri recovers and gets to see the celebrations. Erimem knows she can't be Pharaoh and decides to slip away. Peri suggests that she leave in the TARDIS - there's nowhere on Earth in that period that won't know who Erimem is. The Doctor takes some persuading and lets Erimem know she probably won't have the chance to come back and that wherever or whenever she settles it won't be like anything she's ever known. He tells her of the risks and the downside of such a drastic move, but she wants to go, to learn, and so they go, leaving a badly hurt (broken leg? Arm?) Antranak and Fayum to walk in on the dematerialising TARDIS. Confirmation that Erimem was indeed a god. He doesn't know it yet, but Fayum's going to be Pharaoh. By the way, Yanis is dealt with by Fayum (it's kind of redemption for him after the parasite abandons his mind). He takes up a sword and deals with Yanis (quickly - I guess a swordfight would be dull on audio). Maybe it's not a swordfight at all? Maybe Fayum just cuts a rope or uses the

sword to set off one of the traps in the tunnel/tomb, or uses it to topple a statue on top of Yanis. However he does it, Fayum should deal with Yanis (who'll be in a foul temper, knowing that his chances of taking Egypt are gone and because he realises that the creature has been manipulating him). The quiet priest defeats the warlord and shows himself worthy of being Pharaoh.

This ending's pretty much violence-free (except for the Fayum/Yanis bit, which won't be actual fisticuffs or anything like that) and I think it's more of a *Doctor Who* ending. The Doctor's thinking his way out rather than fighting. He doesn't relish the thought of one human brain having to deal with what it'll have to go through (particularly when he finds out it's Peri's) but the creature needs to be in one host to be defeated.

From your notes, I wasn't sure if you liked the setting for the ending or not. It needed to be somewhere isolated but close to the action, and the sink-shaft in the story really does exist, as does the tunnel at the bottom of it. According to myths recounted in various Graham Hancock and Robert Bauval type books, the tunnel leads to a giant chamber between the front paws of the Sphinx, and also branches off into the pyramids. Whether it does or not, I've no idea, but I thought it was worth using the myth. It felt like the right sort of place for a *Doctor Who* finale, and made sense from the Doctor's perspective in the story. But, if you don't like it, we could shift to a temple or even a necropolis. It's just that almost everybody already know the pyramids and the Sphinx, so we don't have to take too much time setting up the location for the ending.

Obviously, the ending's still in pretty rough form here, but it's probably best to let you have a shufti now, rather than plough on and find you're after something totally different.

E-mail: Iain McLaughlin to Gary Russell - Monday 10 July 2001
More>>>

The points you raised in no particular order.

It wouldn't be common for women of this era to read but it wouldn't be unheard of either. A lot would depend on where the women came from. Some of the tribes of the time would make sure their noble-women could read to make them more appealing to whoever they were going to wind up getting married off to. The nature of the Pharaoh involved comes into it a lot as well. If Pharaoh wanted to keep his women uneducated, well, that was that really. No reading, no learning, no chatting about anything interesting - just lie back and think of Egypt whenever old Pharaoh got the horn and decided it was number 47's turn. Given that Erimem can read and fight, I think we can assume that her dad was a pretty reasonable Pharaoh, who didn't have a problem with women learning and probably encouraged it.

The world being round was first proven by an Egyptian smart-arse by the name of Eratosthenes. He was an astronomer, historian, geographer, philosopher, theatre critic, poet and mathematician. A right bloody clever clogs. Anyway, he worked out that the world was round by using big sticks, the movement of the sun during the day and the difference in time of sunset on the same days in different locations. He worked out the Earth's diameter and circumference to within a few percent of the exact figure. He was a good bit later than Erimem's era but he did work from other people's suggestions and ideas going back to Erimem's time and before, so it's feasible that the idea was being bounced about at the time by a local brainbox.

Pronunciations. Okay, here goes.

Erimemushinteperem	Erimem-oosh-in-tep-er-em
Kohl	pronounced like 'Coal'
Hatchepsut	as it's written Hat-chep-soot
Smenkhare	Smen-carry
Heset	hes-set
Maab	Mab
Maat	Mat
Seth	as <i>Emmerdale</i> as it sounds - became Set at some point in

history but I used Seth to avoid *Pyramids of Mars* ideas.

Rhaoubak	Roo-back
Priest's speech	As it's written I suppose. It's not a real prayer. I made it up.

It was just something to sound authentic before the priest got a doing.

Cheops names	Key-ops
	As they're written. I made them up and they're not used

again anywhere.

By the way (WARNING - high boredom factor ahead), stating that Smenkhare was female is taking sides in a contentious debate amongst Egyptian scholars. Traditionalists go with the idea that Smenkhare was a noble who succeeded Atenakhen and that's that, so there and yah-boo-sucks. A more modern idea is that Smenkhare is actually Atenakhen's wife, Nefertiti. At first her name was just Nerfertiti, then she changed it to Nefer-Nefer-Nuahu-Nefertiti (fit that on a cheque). She disappeared totally from history at the exact time that the co-ruler, joint Pharaoh (and lover if we go by the smutty carvings) of Atenakhen appeared. This co-ruler was Smenkhare-Nefer-Nefer-Nuahu. So, one side says it's the same person. The other side shouts 'bollocks' and the intellectual debate continues. It's not really a big thing - but I reckoned that *Doctor Who* would always come down backing the controversial side of an argument like this one.